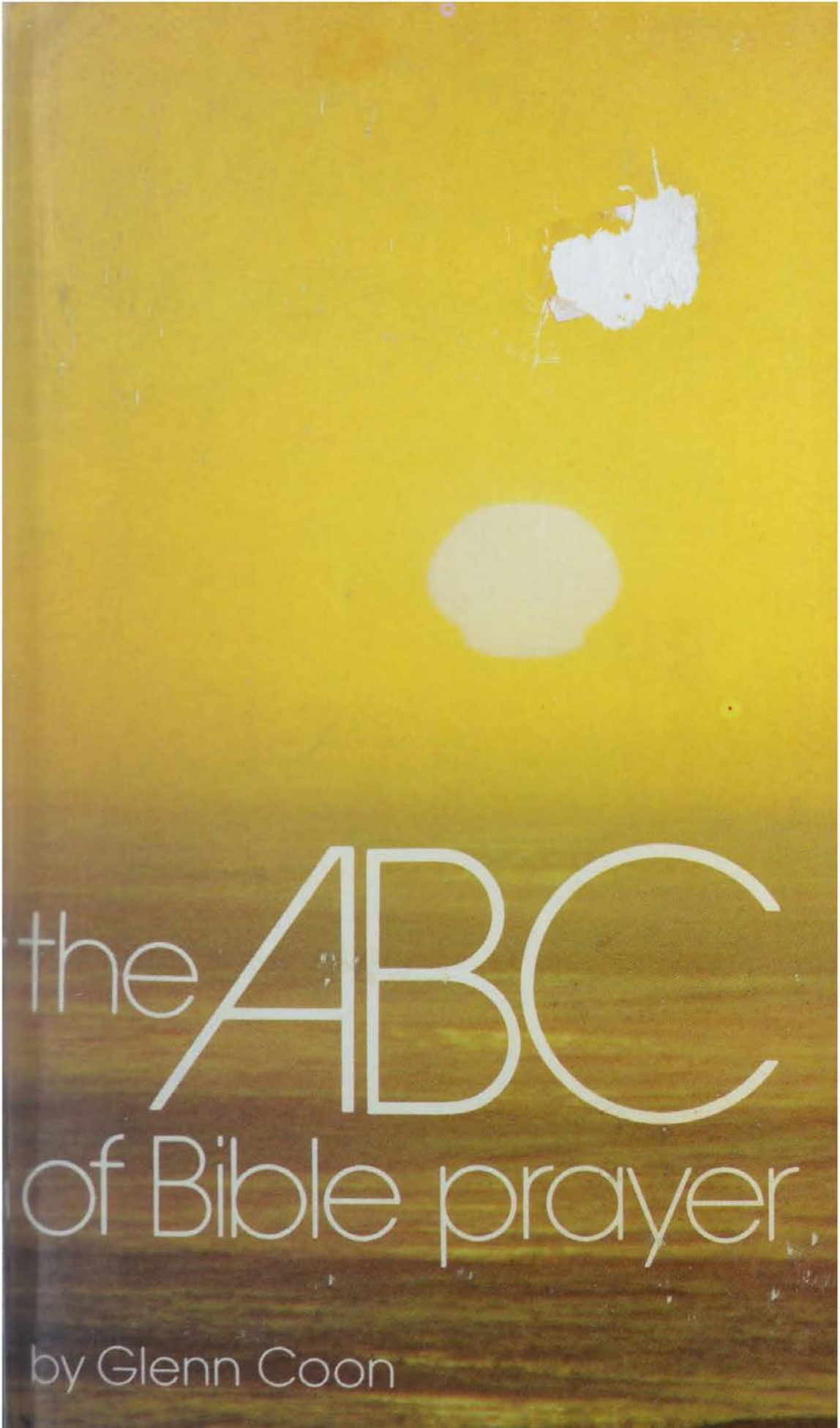

the ABC
of Bible prayer
by Glenn Coon

THE ABC's OF BIBLE PRAYER

twelve sermons on
the prayer of faith

by Glenn A. Coon

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by G. A. Coon
Roan Mountain, Tenn. 37687

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A DYNAMIC BIBLE LIVING Publication

Manufactured in the
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Contents

Dedication
We Are Thrilled
God's Nail—Poem
1. At The End Of My Rope 7
2. From Nightmare To Dreamland 19
3. In Agony I Sought 38
4. Infatuated 57
5. From Drunkard To Counsellor 75
6. Walking Away With Victory 91
7. Thrilling Financial Solutions 106
8. Our Amazing Healings 124
9. The Doctrine Of Non-retaliation 144
10. Guided By Visions and Dreams 160
11. Lord's Day Problems Solved, Too 175
12. Promises For The Time Of Trouble 190

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4. Infatuated 57
5. From Drunkard To Counsellor 75
6. Walking Away With Victory 91
7. Thrilling Financial Solutions 106
8. Our Amazing Healings 124
9. The Doctrine Of Non-retaliation 144
10. Guided By Visions and Dreams 160
11. Lord's Day Problems Solved, Too 175
12. Promises For The Time Of Trouble 190

WE DEDICATE

this work to every one in trouble, but eager and willing to find a new science—the Science of Prayer.

to tell you, dear reader, that this little book, which presents the ABC's of Bible prayer, is itself an answer to prayer.

Because of the urgent requests from people all across America for these sermons in printed form, I decided one morning to fall on my knees with the Bible open to Philippians 4:19, "But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus." I told God I needed someone to transcribe these sermons from tape, edit them, and prepare them for printing, as I could not possibly do it by myself. I prayed most earnestly. I asked (Matthew 7:7), I believed (Mark 11:24), and I claimed the answer by returning *thanks* that I *had* received—just like Jesus did at the grave of Lazarus (John 11:41)—as we are recommended to do by our favorite author in the book, *Education*, pages 257, 258.

That very night, as I spoke at Pastor Gery P. Friesen's church in Norwalk, California, he approached me with the words, "Have you ever thought of securing someone to transcribe these sermons from the tape, edit them, and make arrangements for the printing?" I could scarcely believe my ears. Pastor Friesen has done just that! With his heavy church program, he has sacrificed time to carry through on this project. Our thanks to God, and to him for being God's servant and letting God answer our prayer through him.

God will answer your prayer, too, as you learn the simple ABC's of Bible prayer.

—G. A. C.



Lord, make me a nail upon the wall,
Fastened securely in its place.
Then from this thing so common and so small,
Hang a bright picture of Thy face;
That travelers may pause to look
Upon the loveliness depicted there,
And passing on their weary ways,
Each radiant face may bear—
Stamped so that nothing can efface—
The image of Thy glory and Thy grace.
Lord, let not one soul think of me.
Only let me be a nail upon the wall,
Holding Thy picture in its place.

—Mildred Hill

1

At the End of My Rope

I WOULD like to have you notice seven Bible facts with me:

1. Jesus is coming again. "And, behold, I come quickly" (Revelation 22:12).
2. He is coming for those whom He calls "chosen." Revelation 17:14, "And they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful."
3. They will be chosen in a furnace of affliction. Isaiah 48:10, "I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction."
4. This furnace of affliction is called "a time of trouble," or "the time of Jacob's trouble." Daniel 12:1, "And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time." Jeremiah 30:7 says, "It is even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it."
5. Jacob was delivered out of his time of trouble because he learned the prayer of reception. (Genesis 32:7-9, 12, 28.) This was not the prayer of commitment, not the prayer of thanksgiving, adoration or penitence, merely. Neither was it merely the prayer of

confession. Jacob was delivered because he had learned the prayer of reception.

6. His time of trouble and deliverance is a type of the time of trouble and deliverance of the people of God in the last days. Jeremiah 30:7, "It is even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it." Jacob here is representative of a group of people living just prior to the coming of the Lord who have gone through the tremendous refining process in a furnace of affliction. Notice that they will "be saved out of it." It is because they have learned the prayer of reception which Jacob learned and which guided him through his time of trouble.
7. The result: They will be like Jesus Christ Himself. 1 John 3:1-3, "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure."

Jacob represents a group of people, who through this great time of trouble, this refining process, will come forth as gold. The promise is that this group of people will be saved out of this time of trouble. It is because they have learned what Jacob learned. They have learned to pray as Jacob learned to pray; not merely the prayer of repentance, not merely a prayer of confession, nor of thanksgiving, or adoration. They have learned to pray *the prayer of recep-*

tion. God, coming down through the flaming vault of the skies, looks upon these people and says, They are like Me. I want to belong to that group of people when Jesus comes again. Don't you? And I want it so earnestly that I am determined to pray this prayer of reception.

A number of years ago there was a young man at La Sierra College who, for years, had been trying to find solutions to his problems. He had questions that needed answers. Although he had received many answers to his prayers, it seemed on vital issues the answers eluded him. The answers to the great questions of life he could not find. The real solutions to problems he could not discover. Even after going from one teacher to another, and from one Christian to another, the questions remained unanswered. In vain he sought.

He often went to a lonely spot to pray, pleading with God for the answers to his questions. Although he felt refreshed after a season of prayer, the solution to the questions he faced remained unclear. Finally, one day, he decided on a course of action. He wrote a note and left it for his roommate.

We will call this young man, Bob, and his friend, Jim. Bob wrote a simple note which said, "Dear Jim: I've gone to San Diego to join the navy. Will you kindly pack up my belongings in my trunk? When I'm settled I'll tell you where to send them." Jim returned to the room and read the note, and he read between the lines. Jim felt that the navy did not hold the solution to Bob's problems. He knew that for a man to run away from problems was merely an attempt to run away from himself. And so long as a man carries himself with him, he will carry his problems as well.

Jim realized the need for help in this situation, so he called in some of his close Christian friends and

asked them to pray that God would prevent Bob from being able to join the navy. Earnestly they united their hearts in pressing to God their petition.

This was the time of war when Uncle Sam needed every stalwart, red-blooded American young man available. With these odds against them, these friends of Bob set their faces.

In the meantime, Bob arrived in San Diego and quickly found a navy recruiting officer. He stepped up to him and announced his intention to join the navy. To enhance the situation, he did a little self-advertising. He explained the advantage the navy would realize by his enlistment. This was for good measure so he would not be turned down. When he finished, the officer looked him in the eye and said, "Young man, we are not interested in you right now. We are not accepting any men for a month. Come back later if you want to." His answer was cold and hard.

This shook Bob visibly. He had not expected this at all. He went back to his hotel room and looked through the ad's in the newspaper, hoping to find a job for a month, after which he would go back and enlist. He found an ad calling for a salesman. Bob felt himself to be a pretty good salesman, and so quickly made his way to the office at the address given. Shortly, he was seated in the manager's office and they fell into conversation.

In a few minutes this man sized up the situation. Standing to his feet and shaking a menacing finger in Bob's face, the man said: "Young man, go back home and decide what you want to do. Then do it!"

Now Bob was really shaken. Here was a man who was looking for a salesman. He had spent good, cold cash advertising for a salesman. A salesman shows up. And he sends him home! He had offered his serv-

ices to his country in a time of dire need, and his country had turned him down.

Now what should he do? He could not go back to college and save face. He did not know what to do. He had only $8.50 in his pocket. There in his hotel room he remembered that he had had many answers to his prayers. Falling on his knees he prayed. In effect he said: Dear Lord, I have come to the end of my rope. I do not know what to do. I do not know where to go. But, dear God, if You will come to my rescue and tell me what to do, I will do it. I will go where You want me to go and do what You want me to do. I will be what You want me to be.

Just then, Bob told me, he heard an audible voice speaking to him. A distinct, clear voice, such as he had never heard before, or has heard since. That voice said, "Go to Madison College in Tennessee." Bob did not know where Madison College was in Tennessee.

With $8.50 in his pocket, he started hitchhiking across the continent to Madison College. Six days later he arrived in the town of Madison, two miles from the college. Bob walked the last two miles to the college. It was a dreary, cold, rainy morning. As he was walking along, he kept asking himself, Why did I come across the continent to this school? What can I find here that I couldn't find in California? What is this really all about?

He arrived on campus, introduced himself, and was welcomed. He had a little time to crystalize his thinking. When asked by fellow students what was his purpose in coming to Madison, he answered, "I have come here for one express purpose. I am trying to find a philosophy that will guide me through the coming time of trouble." This was Bob's consistent answer to the queries of his fellow students.

If there is anything the church ought to be anxious about, it is a clear concept of this philosophy. I am not so interested in people continually repeating the fact of the coming of the seven last plagues and the time of trouble. The mere repetition of these things only fills us with fear. And the Bible says, "Fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love" (1 John 4:18). The important thing, however,—and that which I am interested in—is helping people learn the philosophy which will guide them through the coming time of trouble, and make it possible for them to look up and say, "Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us" (Isaiah 25:9).

This book has been prepared with this one thought in mind. I want you to know more than that there are dark, dreary days ahead. God knows that. The devil knows that. The angels know that. Almost everyone knows that! But we need to know more than that! We need to know—we need to become acquainted with—the philosophy that will guide us triumphantly through the time of trouble. We can be walking in triumph like angels (Zechariah 12:8) in the closing days of human history if we learn and practice receptive prayer, and follow its simple guide lines.

In spite of the fact that Bob had determined he would never again seek counsel from a living soul, after two weeks on campus, he decided he would try once more. He made his way over to the pastor's study and knocked on the door. It was my privilege to have been pastor of Madison College church at that time.

What Bob did not know, as he stood there knocking at the door, was that I had been going through an experience similar to that which he had been passing through. He did not know that this pastor

had gone down some weary, lonely lanes, and had been pleading with God to give him some answers. Although I had been a minister for years, there had been many questions in my mind that remained unanswered. Another thing Bob did not know was that, after pouring out my heart to God and searching importunately, I had found some answers.

I have come to this conclusion: When God, in His mercy, has given light to a searching soul, and someone else is looking for the same light and understanding, He will bring these two people together, even if it means crossing the continent. God will give the answer when the thinking has been crystalized sufficiently to know the need. Bob had crystalized his thinking. He knew his need, and was ready for some answers.

Bob entered the office and began to relate his experience. I turned to him and said, "Bob, I'm not so interested in your individual problems. But I would like to share with you a philosophy of answered prayer that can solve *every* problem." And so I opened my Bible and we began. One hour later Bob stepped out of that office as though he were walking on air! He had made some thrilling discoveries. He was elated! I had given him a study on the science of the prayer of faith which I learned in my Gethsemane. I found in my agony of searching something for which I have been continually grateful. I found the ABC's of prayer.

In Matthew 7:7 I learned the "A" of prayer. "Ask, and it shall be given you." In Mark 11:24 I learned the "B" of prayer. "Believe." Believe that you have received the answer! Isn't that simple? Yes, the rudiments are simple, but to do it is something else. To kneel down before God and open His Book to any one of the 3,573 promises, or clusters of promises, and place my hand on it and ask God,

with the simplicity of a little child, to fulfill this promise in my behalf, and then believe He will do it simply because He has promised, is not a complicated thing. To do this does not require the faith many attribute to Elijah, but that of a little child.

So often we come to God knowing too much. We are too wise. Too mature. Was it not Jesus Who said, "Except ye . . . become as little children . . ."? How does a little child accept a statement of her mother?

There were two little girls disputing a point. The one said, "It's so."

"No, it 'tain't so," the other girl countered.

"Yes, it is so too, because Mommy said it's so."

The basis of her belief was not so many words but it was Mother. The basis of our belief is not so many words, but it is that God said it! Our faith is to be based on God. Does God lie? or does God tell the truth? This is important as we consider this question.

The little girl was still not satisfied.

"It still 'tain't so," she insisted.

"It is too so, because Mommy said it's so. And what Mommy says is so, even if it 'tain't so," her friend blurted out in disgust, to think anyone would doubt the word of her truthful mother.

That is child-like faith. That is taking what Mother says, as so, because of Mother! I found I had to fall on my knees and say, "God, I believe the promises You have made, because YOU say it's so, even if the devil says it's not so." Even if circumstances say it can not be so—if God says it is so, *it is so!* This is the "B" of prayer. This, however, is not the prayer of reception.

The "C" is the prayer of reception. And this I had to learn after having preached for many years. The "C" is to claim the promise for which I have

asked, and which I have told God I believe. I claim it by returning thanks that *I have received* it. This is the secret that had eluded me for many years. This is what Jacob did in his time of trouble. He confessed his unworthiness and said, "Lord, You told me You would stay by me. And You told me You would bring me back home safely. I am frightened because my brother is coming with four hundred soldiers. I am afraid he will destroy my family, my little ones and all that I have. This is my problem, Lord, but I am relying on the promise You made to me regarding my safety. You promised me, Lord."

Humbly he confessed his sins, crying to God for mercy, repeating the promises, and reminding God of all He had promised. Now he was asking God to fulfill these promises. He actually *claimed* the promises. Reverently he said, "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me" (Genesis 32:26). This is the prayer of reception.

Oh that we, like Jacob, might say in prayer, I will not let Thee go except Thou give me the assurance that Thou hast heard me and fulfilled Thy promise.

There are millions of people today who are praying prayers of adoration, prayers of penitence, or prayers of thanksgiving, prayers of confession, and prayers of request. Very few even admit that they believe! But I do not believe there is one Christian out of a hundred who is fulfilling the conditions and saying: Lord, I believe that what You have promised You *are* now fulfilling. And I thank You I have received. This is the prayer of reception.

We are going to explore this together as we continue, so we can know how to take hold of this mighty God, this Creator of the universe, this Saviour Who is eager and willing to deliver anyone who comes to Him. We too can come to Him and say:

Lord I believe this promise. I believe You are now fulfilling this promise. And I thank You that You *have* fulfilled it.

Where did I get this from? I got it from the Bible. But a favorite author of mine was the instrument of God to point out to me these thrilling facts. It is found in the book *Education,* by E. G. White, pages 253-258. Here is just a line or two on page 258 that will thrill you: "For any gift He has promised, we may ask; then we are to believe that we receive, and return thanks to God that we have received."

Isn't that thrilling? I want to share with you in the succeeding studies how each of us can do just what this recommends. And you are going to learn how to do it! This experience can, and will, be yours. Your problems can be solved in the framework of this arrangement. God has promised it will be so.

In the book *Christ's Object Lessons,* page 147, there is a suggestion that we take our Bibles in our hands and open them. Then we are to come to God, saying, "Lord, 'I have done as Thou hast said. I present Thy promise.' And I claim the answer."

George Mueller, that great man of faith, used to pray with his Bible open before him. When asked why he did this, he answered, in effect, This open Bible is the channel of communication between God and man. The Holy Spirit gave this Book. The Holy Spirit indicts our prayer. So this open Bible forms a great channel of communication between God and man.

This is the Holy Spirit's word. So as I take His Book, I realize, according to Romans 10:17, that "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." We can come to God and say, This is Your immutable, eternal, everlasting, undying Word. It

cannot fail. "Hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?" (Numbers 23:19.)

It is "impossible for God to lie!" (Hebrews 6:18.) In this fact we can place our complete trust and confidence. There need never be a question in our minds about God's veracity.

Bob left the office that morning having found what he wanted. He was thrilled! He returned to my office a few days later. As I ushered him in, in response to his knock, he said he had come back for a little more information. Before we went into another discussion, I was curious to know if Bob had followed the counsel I had already given him. So I asked, "Bob, have you put into practice what I have shared with you?"

"No, I haven't," Bob confessed sheepishly.

With that, I kindly ushered him back to the door, and with a smile told him to return just as soon as he had done so. A little shaken, Bob left the office, and, as he told me later, he determined to put into practice the information he had received. He confided to me later it was not until that moment that he realized the importance of following through on a conviction. God had led him across the continent to find what he was looking for. He had found it. And now it was time to do something about what he had found.

It is time for us to do something about what the Lord has revealed to us. Don't you agree? Knowledge is of no value unless it is put into active use—unless we do something with it.

Here, now, is what we have learned:

1. Jesus is coming again.
2. He is coming for those who are "called" and "chosen."

3. They will have been chosen in a furnace.
4. That furnace is a time of trouble.
5. That time of trouble is the time of Jacob's trouble.
6. Jacob was saved out of his time of trouble because he learned to pray the prayer of reception.
7. All, who like Jacob learn the prayer of reception and fulfill the conditions as Jacob did, will be led safely through the time of trouble. They will look up into the face of God and say, We are ready for You, O Lord. We have waited for You. They shall be like Him.

Please open your Bible to 1 John 1:9 and place your hand on that promise. Then reverently pray this prayer of reception: Dear Lord in heaven, I have read this promise. I confess that I am a sinner. Please forgive my sins. Now I believe that You have forgiven me, and I return thanks to You that I have received this forgiveness. In dear Jesus' lovely name. Amen.



2

From Nightmare to Dreamland

I WOULD like you to notice seven Bible facts with me:

1. Jesus is coming again. "And, behold, I come quickly" (Revelation 22:12).
2. He is coming for the righteous and the holy. "He that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still. And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be" (Revelation 22:11, 12).
3. He is coming for those individuals because they will not sin any more (Revelation 22:11). A man that is righteous is not sinning, for "all unrighteousness is sin" (1 John 5:17).
4. These people will have stopped sinning, for they have learned the philosophy of 1 John 3:9, "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God." They have learned when they take God's seed, God's Word, and place it in their hearts—keep it, hide it, hold it there—they

do not sin. They have learned it by looking to Jesus. They are doing what Jesus did when He was tempted. In Matthew 4:4 the Bible record states that Jesus, when the devil came to Him, hurled a promise at him, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."

These people have learned that Jesus came to take our place, and while here on earth He had no means at His disposal that we do not have. They have adopted the formula for victory that Jesus used—the power of the Word of God! This is the philosophy of hiding the Word of God in the heart. It is a new experience, even as Peter mentions: "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever" (1 Peter 1:23). The seed, which is the Word of God, has been hidden in the heart, as Jesus hid it in His heart. They have found by experimentation that the method Jesus used is the *only* method successful in dealing with temptation. They have read such texts as John 15:3, "Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you." They have read and believed, and claimed such promises as 2 Peter 1:4, "Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust."

These people have learned the philosophy of 1 John 3:9. God's life is in His Word, and when they let the Holy Spirit plant that

Word, and hold and retain that Word, they will stop sinning, because God's immutable, eternal Word declares they will "be holy still." I want to belong to that group! More than that, I am determined to belong to that group! I believe I CAN belong to that group. I believe we all can belong to that group.

5. The secret of Jacob's victory in his time of trouble, recorded for us in Genesis 32:8, 9, 12, 28, is clearly seen to be the fact that Jacob took God's immutable, eternal promise, and in humility and utter selflessness, presented to God the promise that He had made. Jacob said, Lord, You promised me when I left home, that You would stick by me. When I slept on a pillow of stone and You showed me that ladder extending from heaven to earth, again You assured me You would go with me and see me through. Lord, You told me You would not forsake me, but promised me that my seed would be as the stars of the heavens. And You promised me I would be able to return home.

This is how Jacob succeeded. He did not merely pray a prayer of penitence in declaring his unworthiness, but he prayed a prayer of reception in which he asked God to do something he believed God would do. Then he returned thanks to God that He *had* done it! This is the prayer of reception: returning thanks to God for *receiving* that which God has promised. How important that we stretch our faith to include this miracle of prayer. Jacob did not stand before God at the end of that night of wrestling when the angel said, "Let me go, for the day breaketh," and say: If it is Your will to

bless me, then bless me. That would have been a prayer of commitment. Christians today have completely missed the mark as far as the prayer of reception is concerned. They have confused it with the prayer of commitment. Jacob needed more than the prayer of commitment that night. He needed to *receive* power and victory. He needed a new life! He must have it or perish! Tenaciously he clung to the mighty Deliverer and cried from the depths of his soul in agony, "I will not let Thee go, except thou bless me." In effect he said, I will not let You go except You give to me that which You have promised me, and that for which You have come.

God said, "Let me go." But Jacob held on. Again he cried: I cannot let You go. You must give that for which You have come. I want it, Lord.

Alright, God replied. No longer are you Jacob. From here on you are Israel. You are a prince. You are a victor. You have found deliverance. You have received that for which you have asked.

6. All who do what Jacob did, will go through the last time of trouble safely. Jeremiah 30:7, "It is even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it." This is the promise! Deliverance is promised those who have learned the philosophy of accepting the life of Jesus Christ in His Word; of receiving Him personally in His Word. They will pass through the time of trouble victorious, triumphant!
7. God Himself will declare that they are without fault. Jude 24, "Now unto him that is

able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy."

Think of it—God will present us faultless! God Himself looks upon His children in the last great day when He comes for them. Jesus presents them to the Father saying: Father, here they are. There is not one fault in them! How good it is to be in Christ, filled with His life, covered by His righteousness!

I feel like singing the song, "Lord, I want to be in that number when the saints go marching in." Don't you? When we can say: Lord, I plan to be in that number when the saints go marching in. O Lord, You promised to help me. And because You promised me, I *know* I have received the power, the victory in Jesus. Then we will not fail to be in that number.

In the previous message, I shared with you the experience of a young man, Bob. I told you how, because of a lack of communication, a failure to evaluate clearly, perhaps, his own thinking so he could intelligently express his need, he was unable to find the answers to some very deep-seated questions that harassed him. You will remember that the Lord led him across the continent to me because I had previously gone through a time of trouble myself, and the Lord had led me to some answers that He wanted me to share with Bob, and others.

The Lord gives us these little times of trouble so that we will be prepared to go through the greater time of trouble when it comes. That is reasonable. Isn't it? We also saw how he finally prayed the prayer of faith and reception. Let us explore it further.

It was in my time of trouble that I became acquainted with the Word of God as *seed*. It was a marvelous revelation to me. Jesus declared, "The seed is the word of God" (Luke 8:11). It was in my time of trouble that I learned how to hide the seed in my heart. Like the apostle Paul, I must confess that I have not yet attained. But I want to move forward and march onward. This, I believe, is what counts.

God led me through a time of trouble to teach me this basic philosophy, so I could help Bob, first of all, and then a host of others. Now the event that prepared me for this encounter was an amazingly small one. It was so small that I have come to the conclusion it is the small tests of life that prepare us for the big ones. It is the little times of trouble that prepare us for the great time of trouble. It is as we face temptation we realize that which God would perform within us. As we meet the everyday temptations—the common, ordinary temptations—successfully, we are prepared for the greater temptations. It may well be, when we arrive at our Father's house and look back over our experience, that what we thought was a little incident in our lives, was in reality a tremendous event—an actual turning point in our lives!

So it was with my wife and me. Many years ago, we were living in Rochester, New York. We had just completed a very heavy series of evangelistic meetings. Our energies were drained. I had been counseled, on several occasions, to get some physical diversion—some exercise. Good health depends upon good circulation, and good circulation depends upon physical exercise. We were living in a home located on a lot so small that there was not room for even a little garden, which would give us some enjoyable exercise.

I had been reading two books. One was titled *Country Living.* I realized more than ever before, that if I was going to keep my health, I had better get a garden. I knew I had to get exercise somehow! The other little book was entitled *What God Hath Promised.* I could look back to my childhood and see where God had answered many of my prayers. There were so many answered prayers I could count, you would have thought I could never have lost my way. But, you know, it is not the number of answered prayers we have experienced, but rather, how we have held on to the arm of the Lord, that is important.

Often I would see the title of that small book *What God Hath Promised,* and think of the remainder of the Scripture that reads, "What he [God] had promised, he was able also to perform" (Romans 4:21). This ran through my subconscious mind day after day. I was reminded of it often, because we were giving this book at the evangelistic meetings as an attendance incentive. The Lord blessed us in our meetings. Many were baptized as a result of that campaign. Night after night we gave them this book *What God Hath Promised.* I thought of the many times I had taken God at His word, and how He had used me, as a channel, to bring eternal life and wonderful deliverances to individuals with unworthy habits of one kind or another. I thought of many instances of answered prayer in my adult personal life too.

At the age of twenty-one I was a teacher in our church school system. I told my pupils that the day would come when I would prescribe the promises of the Bible, just like a doctor prescribes medicine for his patients. It would be a promise for each kind of problem. But I had done very little about it. Now

here I was, looking at the title of that book *What God Hath Promised.*

The time had come for me to use a specific Bible promise for my own problem. My request was an unselfish one. I was only asking for what I needed to continue my ministry of service to others. I had no other motive than to be able to keep my health so that I might serve others. And an unselfish motive is a very important condition to answered prayer. It seemed like a small request that I was making of the Lord. However, it has meant much to me ever since.

For weeks, as I visited, I had been on the lookout for a home with enough land for a garden. But I could not find a home that would satisfy my need. I decided I would buy an acre of land, if nothing else, and build. But no one would sell me even one small acre from any of those big farms. I was amazed to discover their unwillingness in this matter. I was becoming desperate.

I had been spending an hour or more every morning in prayer. I had a prayer list of 165 names that, morning by morning, I presented to the Lord, asking for His divine blessing upon them, and to move upon them in such a way that they would surrender their hearts to His love. It was such a sweet fellowship! But I wanted a closer fellowship with my Lord. I wanted to be able to reach out and take God at His word and expect the impossible to take place—and in this particular case, give me a place where I could have a garden! It did not revolve around a situation where someone said: I'll kill you if you serve the Lord. It concerned a garden! That is why I say the Lord often tests us in some of the smallest things of life.

After I had kept my eyes open for weeks, one morning as I was finishing my prayer, the thought

came to my mind: I'm not going to look around any longer. I am going to ask the Lord to give me a place *today*. And if He doesn't give me that place today, I'll know that maybe I am going to be transferred! So I wrote a letter to the Lord! I believe it was the first letter I ever wrote to Him. In the letter I said in effect: Dear Lord, I need a place where I can have a garden. I know You know where such a place can be found, for You know the end from the beginning. Help me find it today. If I do not find it today, I'm not going to search any longer, because You know I just don't have the time. We have a heavy program here, and today must be our last day to look.

I took this little letter downstairs to where my wife was doing the laundry, and said, "Honey, the Bible says in Matthew 18:19, 'If two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven.' Do you agree that this is reasonable? If the Lord does not give us a place out in the country today, we will just forget it."

"That's fine with me," she said. "I agree."

We had fulfilled the condition, and whether she signed the letter or not I do not remember, but we prayed together and presented this letter to the Lord.

I asked my wife to forget the washing, and we started out to look for a place. We hunted all day, and found nothing suitable to our need. My wife decided it was time to prepare supper. So I took her home and she prepared the meal. While she was busy in the kitchen, I stated that I was going out for a few more minutes. I drove east on Route 104. I parked the car and reverently bowed my head and prayed something like this: Lord, if You are going to give me a place in the country, You are going to

have to move fast. I am going to keep looking for just a few more minutes. And when I have made this little trek, I am through looking. I am going to return home and forget the whole thing.

Just then I had the strangest feeling. I was impressed that the place immediately on my right, was the one. All I could see was an old dilapidated farm house. Whether this was an impression or the voice of the Holy Spirit is not too important to me. I am convinced that many times these impressions are the Holy Spirit talking to us, endeavoring to guide and lead us. Here it was! I was not sure I was hearing right—or seeing right. But I got out of the car and went up to the house. There was no "For Sale" sign to be seen anywhere!

I thought to myself, as I was going up the walk: How am I going to approach these people when there's no "For Sale" sign? How do I know it is even for sale?

Then I decided I would go to the door and ask, "Is this the place that was for sale?" At least then I would be safe.

So I rang the doorbell. When the lady opened the door I inquired enthusiastically, "Is this the place that was for sale?" Her mouth fell open and she looked shocked!

"How did you know? To tell you the truth, it has been for sale, but we had given an option, and the option expired just today. My husband is at the store on the corner. You will find him there. He will sell it to you."

I went back to the store to which she had directed me. I found her husband and explained why I was there.

"Yes," he said, "I'll sell it to you."

Right then I gave him a deposit—ten dollars. I promised fifty dollars in all by the next week. And

hat was all the money I had. The next week when I rought him the money, that was it. I had never so uch as looked the place over! I knew this was the lace, and I was thrilled I had found it. I was sure his was it.

When I brought them the balance of the fifty-ollar deposit, I told them I had found the place in nswer to prayer, and that everywhere I went I was oing to share this experience. And for many years f extended health and service in God's cause, I have lone just that.

I had plans to live in the house and sell all the and except about one acre that I needed for the arden. The devil listened to these plans and he immediately got busy. When I mention the devil and is antics, I do not want you to think I am a devil vorshiper. Some people keep talking about the devil and all he does. Let me tell you, I believe God is bigger than the devil, and I want people to know that I believe God has more power than Satan. I want people to know what God is like. To know of His power and might. But the devil intruded at this point in a very forceful way. In the very beginning of the sin problem, God had promised to step on the serpent's head. (Genesis 3:15.) But just like a serpent, after you step on his head he still squirms, so Satan was doing a lot of squirming just about that time.

Immediately after I bought this farm, I had a visit from one of my brothers. I am the youngest in a family of eight boys, and I have had to take advice all my life! Well, I told him about my new place and was anxious to show it to him. So we drove out to see it. I was so proud and thankful for this wonderful answer that would make it possible for me to extend my life of ministry for others. It must have shown in my countenance as I explained,

"This is the place the Lord gave us in answer to our prayers and a letter we wrote to the Lord."

This brother of mine had been a preacher for many years, and I admired him greatly. I was anxious for his reaction. At this point he looked me full in the face and asked, "You wrote a letter to the Lord?" half in unbelief.

"Why, yes," I replied enthusiastically.

"Do you want me to tell you something? I'm convinced the Lord didn't get his mail that day," my brother replied.

Well, you know, that did not make me feel too good. But that was not all. Another brother came and took a look at it, and he was not quite so gracious as the first brother had been. He asked, "Do you mean to say this is the result of answered prayer?"

"Yes," I replied, still enthusiastic, but eager for his supporting faith.

"Well, if you ask me," he said, "this prayer was answered. But I think the devil answered it!"

My mother was next on the scene. She came and wanted to see the place. This time I was sure *she* would speak a word of encouragement. But when she saw it she sadly said, "Son, how much money have you put into this place?"

"Fifty dollars, Mother."

"Well, if you will back out of this deal, I will give you the $50.00."

Three lovely relatives! There was just one ray of sunshine in it all. When my wife came to see it for the first time, she said, "I think it's fine. I like it." Thank the Lord for a wife who will stick by the side of her husband, and for a husband who will stick by the side of his wife.

I had an atheistic lawyer draw up the contract. This contract called for me to pay $3,500 on a cer-

:ain day in a certain number of weeks. "You have :hat amount in hand, of course," he remarked kindly.

"No, I don't. But I will when the time comes."

"Well, how are you going to get it?" he wanted to know.

"Oh, I'm going to sell my place in the city," I smiled.

"But you have a deadline date when you must have the money here in the office, and suppose your house doesn't sell?"

"You see, sir," I replied enthusiastically, "I am a minister, and the Lord is a part of this deal. He always hears and answers prayer."

He looked a little astonished and blinked twice. "Just suppose you do not have it sold by the time the money is due. What then?"

"Oh, it will be sold. There is no question. The Lord always answers prayer. Don't you worry, I will have the money here on time."

He tried to rephrase the question several different ways, clearly indicating that what I was telling him just did not make any sense to him at all. With almost a look of pity he continued, "But just suppose it is not sold . . . Suppose the Lord . . ."

"Sir, don't you worry," I smiled confidently. "It will be sold. I am sure of that."

When the day arrived that we needed the $3,500, our home was sold. In glee I took the money to his office and presented it to him. "See, here it is—just as I told you!" He was delighted to see the money in on time, but I am sure he did not believe the Lord had anything to do with it. To him it was just luck—happenstance!

The next step was not as easy. Within three months I had to have $6,000, and I did not have another home to sell. With my brothers having said

what they did, and my mother having said what sh did, I knew there was something *I* had to do. One o my brothers told me I was being presumptuous in stead of exercising faith. This led me to a study o everything I could find on the subject of faith i contrast to presumption.

I found the difference between the two. We ar guilty of presumption, I found, when we take th promises of God and expect Him to fulfill ther without our first fulfilling the conditions. Presump tion involves claiming the promises of God bu using the answers to these promises for selfish pur poses. If we fulfill the conditions and use the an swers from God to bless others instead of hoardin them to ourselves, we are not presumptuous, n matter how far we reach out in faith. My reaso for asking for the blessing, and claiming it, was un selfish. So I had a good foundation upon which t build.

In my study I came across experiences of mer like George Mueller. I learned how God answere his prayers of faith in times of trouble and for un selfish needs. I found a number of stories involvin men who reached out in faith, and how the Lor came to their rescue when the need was great an the answer would glorify His name. I went out int the middle of my land, and with my hands in th soil I poured out my heart to God. I prayed mos earnestly, "Lord, if I have acted presumptuously forgive me. I will back out of this deal even yet. But if I have been consistent with principle, if I have done right, I can not back up because I have put You right in the middle of it. And I will not turn my back on You."

My mother came to me, and as all concerned mothers do, she began, in a way which I knew came

from a heart filled with love, "Glenn, I'm afraid for you."

"Why, Mother?" I asked. "What are you afraid of?"

"I'm afraid you're going to be an infidel."

"An infidel! Me, Mother? Why would you think that?"

"Well, you are expecting so much of God, and when He does not come through, I am afraid you will turn completely from Him."

I assured my mother that I had no question but what God *would* help me. I was practicing what I had been encouraging others to do. I had been telling people to talk faith—talk as though ours is an invincible faith. And it can be if it is founded on the Word of the mighty God of the Bible and an unselfish request. I had been teaching people not to say, "My faith is weak," but rather, "My God is strong." I had realized the truth of the Bible statement that by "beholding" we "are changed." And this prompted me to encourage people to focus on the positive attributes of God—His strength, His love, wisdom, and might. You see, to talk about our failings means that we become weaker. Talk about God's power, however, and faith will increase. It is a law that has proven itself over and over. This prompted me to tell my mother, "Mother, God is going to answer my prayer, and I am not going to be an infidel."

In my study on claiming Bible promises, I found one book that I would recommend above all others. It is the book *Education,* by E. G. White. Pages 253-258 hold some of the most precious lines I have ever read. I quote Jesus Who said, "The seed is the word of God" (Luke 8:11). For any promise that God has made, we are to ask. (Matthew 7:7.) "Then we are to believe that we receive" (Mark

11:24). Then "return thanks to God that we *have* received" (John 11:41). "The gift is in the promise."

This is it! We can come to God and place our hands on one of His promises and tell Him: Lord, I claim this promise, and I thank You that I *have received* the answer. This is the prayer of reception. There are certain promises that allow me to approach God on that basis. I have a right to do that. There are other promises that call for a prayer of commitment. There are prayers of praise, adoration, and confession. But this is the prayer of reception. This is the prayer that guides us through the time of Jacob's trouble.

Time went on. Then, in just a few more days—five to be exact—I must raise $6,000. And I did not have a penny in sight. The chapter in the book *Education* was a million-dollar chapter as far as I was concerned right then. I determined that if I could find a promise that would assure me of $6,000, I would ask for it. More than that, I would believe it would be provided, and thank God for having received it. But you know, I could not find a promise for $6,000.

I prayed earnestly, "Lord help me find a promise that is the equivalent to $6,000." And do you know, God guided me to it! Here it is. Philippians 4:19, "But my God shall supply all your need."

That was it! That covered the needed $6,000! How happy I was to find that promise! How relieved I was, for I had been greatly concerned, as you can imagine. You see, I still had to deal with the questions and doubts that had been planted in my mind by my brothers and my mother. I had been told that the devil had answered my prayer, and that God did not always get His mail. I had to know just where I stood. I had to be sure. Did God an-

swer my prayer, or didn't He? Did God get His mail, or didn't He? I had to know. Was this farm the result of answered prayer, or wasn't it? These questions had to be settled beyond a reasonable doubt!

I asked God for $6,000. I prayed, "Lord, please let me have this money. I want it so I can keep my word, because You keep Your word. It was You Who gave me this land, and it was You, also, Who gave me the determination to keep my word. Thank You, Lord, for having supplied the money I need."

I looked for the $6,000 but couldn't find it. But then I remembered that I still had five days before I needed it. Although God had promised to supply the need, the need was yet five days away. Each day I prayed this prayer. And again on the day it was due. On that day I thanked God for having supplied the money. Again I said, "I thank You I *have received* it." But there still was no money to be seen—not a penny! This took faith. I tremblingly believed, and I did not dare to back down. But I said, "Lord, where do I go from here?" I was still satisfied that I was following divine guidance. Jesus said, "Ask." I had done that. He also said, "Believe." I had done that. I also had thanked God I had received. That is the prayer of reception. But now where to turn, I did not know! That day was the crisis of my prayer life.

I was reminded at that time of the hens on our farm when I was a boy. After the hay was mown and put in the barn, they would go into that hay and lay their eggs. The eggs were there, but we had to go and find them. So, I said, the money is here. I've just got to go and find it. So I took another promise. Psalm 32:8, "I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye."

After reading the promise, I prayed, "Lord, I am going out to find the $6,000. Please guide me to it." I got into the car and started out. At Culver Road I turned left. Then at Main Street I turned right. Down the street I drove, until I found myself in the heart of town. I parked the car in the one available spot, and found myself right in front of my atheist lawyer's office. I said to myself: What a place to come for the money! But I felt impressed to go up to his office and talk with him. And so I did just that. We chatted a few minutes. Then I asked, "Phil, where can I borrow $6,000 for three months?"

"Down there," he replied, without a moment's hesitation, as he pointed to a bank. This was not his bank, however. Nor was it the bank I was dealing with.

"But they do not know me at that bank," I answered. With that he picked up the telephone and gave them a call. He asked for Bill and said, "Look, Bill, loan Dr. Coon $6,000 for three months. Thanks a lot." And that was it!

He told me to go to the bank and ask for Bill, the banker, and he would arrange it. I took about two steps at a time down his stairway and rushed down the street to the bank. When I entered, all I had to do was sign on the dotted line, and within minutes I had the $6,000. On another occasion I asked Bill if it was common for a preacher to be able to borrow $6,000 without co-signers or collateral. "No," he smiled, "we require the signatures of five property owners. And then, very often the preacher does not get it!"

When the note was due, God had given me enough to make a substantial payment, and then renew the note. This I did several times until the note was paid in full.

That did something for this poor heart of mine. I

know there is a God and that He answers prayer. I will tell you more of this thrilling story in succeeding chapters.

Will you open your Bible to 1 John 2:25 and lay your hand on the promise of eternal life? Where it says "us," put in your name and read it aloud that way. Now pray a prayer of reception and thank Him for this gift. Tell Him you believe you have eternal life. And then thank Him that you have received it. God bless you.

"Blessed is the man" whose "delight is in the . . . Lord . . .



he shall be like a tree." Ps. 1:1-3.

3

In Agony I Sought

A SHORT time ago, it was my privilege to conduct a series of meetings in the state of Oregon. While there, a young lady made an appointment to see me. She shared her problem that, by the way, is an affliction of millions. She was nervous, frustrated, confused. There are many pills that have been prepared to deal with just this one problem. She would not be receiving any pills from me. But I gave her something much better. I suggested a ten-point Bible therapy. After discussing it, she promised to put it into effect daily, just as I had outlined it. It had proven to be the most effective therapy for nerves I had ever observed. Later she wrote stating it was not working for her and that she was ready to discard it. I replied, suggesting that she incorporate emotion and will in the ten-point program. But after a week or so she wrote confessing that no adjustment of the program would be effective in her case since the root of her problem was a disbelief in the existence of God.

Not long ago, Mrs. Coon and I were invited, by a mutual friend, to have lunch with another minister. Our friend thought perhaps I might be able to offer some encouragement for the other minister. During the course of the meal, our host very diplomatically

raised the question, "Is there a God? And if so, does He intervene in the affairs of men?" So the very existence of God is at stake in finding solutions to perplexing problems which face us daily.

I was invited to conduct a week of spiritual emphasis in one of our academies a few years ago. While there, I presented a number of studies on the wonderful promises of God's Word. Early in the week the service was opened for questions from the students who responded enthusiastically. There were so many questions, I could see it would be impossible to answer all, even if we classified them. Because they could not all be answered in the chapel period, a teacher came requesting me to take one of his class periods to deal with these questions. I was happy to respond to the invitation. So eager were the students to find answers to their questions, that many who were not members of that particular class came in for these special sessions. These youth wanted to find Bible answers.

Perhaps the most oft repeated questions were: How can I have faith? and, How can I know there is a God? We explored these questions thoroughly, and, with God's help, I believe some answers were found that satisfied these hungering hearts.

So often, during a series of meetings, people come, and with a note of frustration in their voices say, "My problem is that I have so little faith. What can I do to increase my faith?" This question has been raised so often, that I have chosen to share with you my own experience in finding increased faith. I am convinced that no program, no series of meetings, or question-and-answer periods are of any value in finding Bible answers, except there first be a firm belief in God and His power and willingness to intervene in the affairs of men.

The Bible is still true. God is still alive! These are facts. They are demonstrated every day. But the devil is working hard to fill the hearts and minds of men with doubts about His existence. Men and women are asking, "How can I be sure?" Many are desirous of increasing their faith. I am so happy about that, for there is an answer. There is a solution to this problem. I know, for I experienced it when in agony I sought.

About four years before I met Bob, the young man referred to in an earlier chapter, I had gone through a personal Gethsemane. This experience was the result of my taking a Bible promise and determining to step out by faith in accordance with the provisions of that promise. I was simply ready to take God at His Word and claim the promise for a specific need. My wife joined me in this experience. Now you might wonder how anyone would be asked to go through a Gethsemane experience for a reason such as that. I will have to admit there were times when I too wondered. But let me tell you, there is nothing Satan dislikes as much as a man determinedly taking God at His Word so he can unselfishly serve others and show them the way to our Father's house. As I write this revised edition, God has given me twenty-six added years of ministry, and authoring almost a score of books. We believe thousands upon thousands of troubled hearts have found Bible solutions, for which we humbly praise our heavenly Father. One thing, however, steadied me through the entire experience. I knew then, as I know now, that God is bigger than the devil. His power is greater than that of Satan. Let us never forget that!

Now I would like to share seven facts from the Bible with you:

1. Jesus is coming again. Revelation 22:12, "Behold, I come quickly."
2. He is coming for those who have faith. Revelation 14:12, "Here are they that [have] ... the faith of Jesus." This is one of many things they have acquired through experience.
3. God is well pleased with people who have faith, and He is displeased with those who do not. "But without faith it is impossible to please him [God]: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (Hebrews 11:6).

 Here are two fundamental facts: God will not be pleased unless I believe that He IS—that He exists; and I must also believe "that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." You see, I must not only believe that He exists, I must believe that when I come to Him in need He will answer the prayers of my heart. I must believe I can receive answers! Whether the answer comes in the way I expect, or in the way God sees best, is not really important. But I must believe that God is interested in *me;* that He loves *me* and will answer *me* when I come to Him in prayer.
4. Faith is strengthened by observing God through nature. Romans 1:20, 21, "For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse."

 God says that men are without excuse because He is to be seen in the visible things

He has made—creation! If, after viewing the handiwork of God, I still choose to believe that God does not exist, I am without excuse.

Notice: the Bible says there is no excuse for unbelief. God wants us to know He exists. And creation makes His existence very clear.

5. Activated faith comes by bringing it into contact with God's Word. Romans 10:17, "So then faith cometh by hearing, ... the word of God."

 This is how faith, living faith, grows. It is by my bringing it into contact with God's Word.

6. God has given every soul a measure of faith. Romans 12:3, "God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith."

 Every person who has ever lived has been given a measure of faith. We each have some faith, and it is our privilege to increase that measure of faith. This pleases God.

7. To get answers from God, we must mix our faith with His Word. Hebrews 4:1, 2, "Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it. For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them [the children of Israel—two million strong]: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith."

 Here is a book, the Bible. It contains the promises of God. God has given to everyone of us a measure of faith. Now, for me to get solutions to my problems—answers to my prayers—I must take one of the 3,573 prom-

ises, or clusters of promises, in the Book and MIX my faith with it. It is just as simple as that—mixing faith with God's promises!

Perhaps you ask, How can I mix my faith with God's promises? Well, if it were possible, I would like to have us go into the kitchen right now and we would do a bit of mixing. There is no mystery to mixing flour and water, is there? The cook simply pours one into the other, stirs it briskly, and in minutes it is mixed. Using that illustration, we can understand the instruction of God's Word. We are to take the faith we have been given, pour it over the promise of God, and mix the two.

But again, you say: How do I pour my faith over the promises of God's Word? I pour my faith over His Word by saying, "Lord, I believe Your Word. When I say, "Lord, I believe this promise," what am I pouring over it? Spoken faith. I can even feel my breath as I am speaking. Even as I am speaking, I am pouring spoken faith over the Word of God as I cry out, "Lord, I believe Your Word!"

My favorite author, in the book *Christ's Object Lessons*, page 147, suggests that we can take our Bibles in our hands and turn to any one of the promises, claiming it by faith. We are teaching classes now in which we urge people to do this very thing. We suggest they take any of the promises, open the Bible and even put their finger right on the promise and say, "Lord, I believe this promise." Then, you see, I am mixing my faith with God's Word. It is just that simple. And that thrilling! You will thrill with me as you experiment with this new concept. It is not really new. It just has not been understood and practiced widely as yet.

The importance of mixing faith and the promises of God is revealed in the experience of the children

of Israel. Of the two million who came out of Egypt, only two entered the land of Canaan, because only two followed God's simple plan. The rest failed to mix their faith with God's promises. Think of it! Only one in a million mixed his faith with God's promise! Had the people in that day simply taken the promises of God and poured the faith that had been given them over these promises, think what might have happened!

God is love. But God is also in earnest when He gives a command. It is necessary for mankind to know and believe that God exists, and that He will reward His people if they will follow His simple plan. He was in earnest in the days referred to in Hebrews 4:1 and 2, even as He is in earnest today! We must believe that God exists. And that God will reward us. These are basic beliefs.

People are anxious to learn and put into practice these wonderful principles. The most exciting days are just ahead of us when we come to know, and experimentally attest to the power of God in our lives. Recently a lady came to me during one of our series of meetings, which, by the way was directed entirely to the exploration of this very theme. She said, "I am going to test this thing. I am going to test God by a very special request."

I smiled and said, "Don't you do anything of the sort." I related the story of the nobleman who came to Christ and reasoned that if He answered his request, then he would know that Christ was God. Jesus turned to this man and said, in effect: Nothing of the kind. You are not asking a sign of Me. You have received plenty of signs that I am the Son of God. That question has been answered sufficiently. You must come to Me and say, I *know* You are divine. And I *know* You are going to hear and answer. Therefore, I present Your promise. Do you

see the difference? One is using faith as a basis; the other uses doubt as the basis. We cannot come to God and say, *If* You do this, I know You exist. No. Emphatically, NO!

When we, however, come to God and say in our hearts: I know that God exists! I know "that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him:" when we present to the Lord His promise asking Him to fulfill it—not to prove His existence but rather because we know He exists, and we know He will answer—then we please Him!

It is said of Enoch (Hebrews 11:5), before he was translated, "that he pleased God." He knew that without faith it was impossible to please his Lord. The world looked on. They watched this man of God. They inquired, What do you think you are going to gain by believing in God's existence? One day they found that Enoch was missing! He had so pleased God by his way of life that God took him to glory-land to be with Him through the countless ages of eternity. Enoch believed God! Enoch believed that God existed and that He was a rewarder of believing men.

We too must believe as Enoch did. And we have as much reason to believe as did Enoch. Often we pass by the very instruments of God's love by which He would have us know of His existence. This is not confined to the layman. There are ministers of the Word that have harbored the question of God's existence. Just the other day a minister spent more than an hour with me discussing this very thing. "How can I know He exists?" was the burden of his heart. I tried to show him how God has revealed Himself in a billion ways. There is proof in every flower, every tree, and every star. Nature's book is replete with testimonies to God's existence.

When my wife and I claimed a Bible promise, and

the devil went to work to bring discouragement, I went into the woods. On my knees I picked a little flower. With this tiny, beautiful flower clutched in my hands, I lifted my face heavenward and prayed to God. I needed an answer. I must have an answer. I had to have an answer to some of my deep problems. I was willing to stay there until the answer came. I was just that desperate. This was some four years before I met the young man, Bob.

It is wonderful how the Lord works. He loves us and demonstrates it in so many ways. A few years before this, I read a sermon that was written by one of my brothers. It was entitled *How I Convinced an Infidel That There Is a God.* At the time I read it, I was not particularly impressed. But here in my agony, on bended knee, I realized the logic and power of that sermon. I took my Bible, and in the fly-leaf I began to write. I began to recall what I had read and gave myself a Bible study right then and there. I wrote it down so I would not forget it. It has been such a blessing to me ever since. I want to share it with you.

I wrote down five things. The first was, *How I know that God exists.* Then I borrowed from my brother's sermon and listed five evidences of God's existence. The first of these was *order.* I looked at the little flower I held in my hand. And as I beheld it, observing the delicate arrangement of its petals, I could see it had *order.* Then I was impressed with its *beauty.* It was just simply lovely. It was indescribably beautiful. The next was *plan.* This flower demonstrated a definite *plan. Design* was next on the list. It had symmetry—no question about that. Last, I put down *means to an end.* These five things declared that there was an Intelligence behind this little flower. It showed Wisdom—the existence of Mind. This is so in all of nature.

And there on my knees I said, "Lord, this little flower shows me that You exist." I saw in that flower

1. Order
2. Beauty
3. Plan
4. Design
5. Means to an end.

This has proven to many great thinkers that a Mind must be in back of nature. This is what Romans 1:20 is talking about. It says that God is clearly seen by the things He has made. And those who will not accept Him on the basis of these proofs are without excuse.

This is what I shared with my minister friend who came to find out how he could believe that God exists. There are billions of evidences of God's existence, one of which is the simple fact that there are billions of little flowers around, to say nothing about the rest of nature. Think of the starry heavens! We cannot look up and see the handiwork of God—those beautiful shining stars—and not be impressed with the existence of a Master Mind. The five distinctive features that were demonstrated in the little flower are to be seen in all of God's handiwork. Yes, these five things always postulate Mind.

This concept is so simple that even a child can understand it. Take any little boy or girl and show him a traffic light. It is not hard for him to see that it has order. It goes on and off. It has design and a definite plan. It is not hard for him to realize that a mind is behind that. It may not necessarily have beauty, but there are enough evidences in its working to show even my four-year-old grandson, Randy, the reasonableness of there being a mind be-

hind the traffic light. I can show him a little flowe and explain the five points I have just mentioned They prove beyond the shadow of a doubt, that Go exists. It is just that simple and that logical. shared with my minister friend that it is not th mind of the child that is doubting God, but rathe the so-called sophisticated mind that is doubtin and questioning the existence of God. His existenc is written in every little flower that grows! Oh tha men would only let themselves believe!

The next item I wrote in the fly-leaf of my Bibl was *How do I know that He is a wise God?* I too the same tiny flower and said, "This tiny flower re veals tremendous wisdom behind it—from the tim it starts germinating, through to maturity." thought of the miracle of pollination, the buddin and the miracle of blooming. It all showed me tha there was infinite wisdom behind that little flowe "I have a wise God!" I exclaimed.

Then I wrote, *How do I know You are a big God* I had some big problems, and I needed a big God t solve them. Through my tears, there on my knees, sobbed out these questions. I needed an answer. could not go on living with the doubts that m brothers had put into my mind when they came t see my property and told me that God did not re ceive His mail the day I wrote Him that letter, o that the devil had answered my prayer. I had t know for sure. So there on my knees I wanted t reassure myself that God is a big God.

I looked at the flower again. I saw the *order beauty, plan, design, and means to an end* in tha flower, and realized that the vast expanse of th heavens revealed these same features. I studied as tronomy in college and was impressed by the im measurable distances in the starry heavens. I knew as I reflected on the greatness of God, shown by Hi

ability to create and direct the myriads of heavenly bodies, that my God was a big God. I found confidence there, out in that quiet spot—confidence in my God to solve my biggest problem.

I had now been reassured that I had a God. I had seen that I had a wise God, and that I had a big God. "Now," I said, "I want to reassess. Do I have a God that is interested in tiny me?" And so I wrote that question down in the fly-leaf of my Bible. I wondered where I would turn to find the answer to that question. I picked up the little flower again and thought: This flower is only a fraction of my size, and yet, Lord, You are interested in that flower. I reasoned: Since God is interested in that tiny flower, which today blooms but might be cut down tomorrow, surely He is interested in me. As I pondered, the truth of His interest in me came home with tremendous conviction.

My last question was this: "How do I know that You communicate to me in the Bible?" To answer this to my satisfaction, I listed three things. Before I wrote them down, I already knew, of course, that God speaks to me through nature. But that does not detail my God. It does not tell me anything specifically about my God. The Bible is the only source of information to give detail about God, and if He does not communicate to me through the Bible, I do not know where to turn.

So I listed three things: (1) Prophecy. I had been preaching that there are 1,335 Bible prophecies of which over 1,000 have accurately met their fulfillment. One of the fulfilled Bible prophecies came to my mind which proved God's communication to me through prophecy. I thought of the story of Josiah Litch which goes somewhat as follows: In 1838 he was preaching in Philadelphia. He was proclaiming prophecy and the Lord was blessing him. The Infi-

del Clubs across America doubted him. They said, "You talk about how Babylon fell according to the prophecy, and how Medo-Persia, Grecia and Rome came on the scene of action and then fell in accordance with Bible prophecy. You tell how Tyre would be a place for the spreading of nets, and so on. How do we know these things weren't written after the events took place?" They wanted an event to fulfill prophecy which would take place that they could see with their own eyes.

So Josiah Litch said that according to his understanding, on August 11, 1840, based on Bible prophecy, the Ottoman Empire would lose its independence. You can well imagine how the doubters doubted. Picture their utter amazement when August 11, 1840 arrived, four powers took over the Ottoman Empire. It is said that 1,000 infidels were converted in a day!

I said, "If a thousand infidels would accept Your Word as a communication of God through that one prophecy, can I question Your communication when I know that over one thousand prophecies have already been fulfilled?"

The second reason I listed, by which I knew that God communicates to me through His Word was: It changes my life. When I thoughtfully and prayerfully read His Word, it makes me pure when otherwise I would be impure. It makes me honest when otherwise I would be deceitful. It makes me kind when otherwise I would be unkind. I knew it had changed my life. I recalled my college days when I arose at 3:30 in the morning and spent an hour with God in prayer and then went to work on the farm. I was convinced of His power in my life during that time. Some of the boys who were my friends had lived unworthily. They had not spent time with God, and so had entered upon some de-

ceitful practices. I knew that had it not been for the power of God in my life through the study of His Word, I too might have been with these boys in their escapades.

And so I knew by the testimony of prophecy that had been fulfilled, that God communicates through His Word. I knew by the change in my life that I had received communication through His Word. Thirdly I knew of God's communication through His Word because of the transformed lives I had witnessed. Murderers had been freed from sinful hatred. Adulterers and thieves had been changed by the Lord of the Bible.

In agony I sought and found that God communicates to me through nature and through His Word. It is by the study of His Word that faith comes. So I opened my Bible and took a Bible promise. I began to pour my faith over that promise, remembering that this was very important, as indicated in the experience of the children of Israel when they left Egypt, how that only two of the more than two million people twenty years of age and over, entered the promised land. The reason for this tragedy was that they did not mix the faith God had given them with the promises of His Word.

I decided I must do some mixing of faith with the promises. So I opened my Bible to a promise and put my finger right on the promise as I prayed, "Lord, because You have promised, I know You will fulfill this promise." This is mixing the two, as the Lord desires us to do. I remembered what Numbers 23:19 says: "God is not a man, that he should lie." This is what gave me the assurance. The verse also says, "hath he said, and shall he not do it?" And so, I knew that God had made a promise. And since He cannot lie, I knew He would keep His promise.

"Now," I said, "I believe You will fulfill Your

promise for me." I turned to Matthew 24:35 and read, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away." I claimed that promise too. What was I doing? I was strengthening my faith by mixing it with His holy Word.

Then I said, "You have said in Hebrews 6:18 that it is impossible for God to lie. So I take this promise on which I have put my finger, knowing it is impossible for it not to be true. It came from You, a God of love, a God Who cannot lie." And so I began to see some of these wonderful things that God wanted me to see; which I needed to see—that unless I saw I might lose my soul as my mother predicted might happen.

My faith was beginning to be strengthened. By the way, what is faith? When people say, "My faith is weak," that is a direct insult to God. Faith is simply trusting God! Faith is believing God! If I say "My faith is weak," I am saying, "I do not much believe in God." When I doubt the miracle of answered prayer and keep taking the disappointments of life as fate and keep talking about my doubts—I am simply telling the world, "I do not believe in God!" Do not ever say your faith is weak. No, talk about the power of God. Talk about His might and ability to answer prayer!

The Lord has shown us in nature that He exists. He has given proof that He communicates to us through nature. Now we can take any of the 3,573 or more promises He has made, and on the basis of His love, we can know that He will fulfill each one. It may not be fulfilled in the exact way we might want it to be fulfilled. But because we know that He loves us, we can relax in the fact that He will answer it the very best way, and in the way we would want it to be fulfilled if we could see the end from the beginning.

I have no right to prescribe *how* God should answer my prayer. This would be presumption. I found through my study at that time, that God reserves the right to answer my prayer according to His choosing. Not mine. I read the comforting text in Jeremiah 33:3: "Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not." You see, God says that He will surely answer our requests, but He will answer them in the way that He sees best. Isaiah 42:16 declares: "I will bring the blind by a way that they knew *not*; I will lead them in paths that they have *not* known."

I used to say to the Lord: Lord, as I go down the highway of life and come to a fork in the road, if I should turn to the right, let such and such a thing happen. If it does happen, then I will know I should turn right. If it does not happen, then I know I must take the other fork in the road. Have you ever done that? This was the way I used to bargain with the Lord. I thought I really had it made. But it did not always work. Because when I got to the fork, it was not always a fork, but rather perhaps five points! Now what was I to do? I had to go to Jeremiah 33:3 and trust that the Lord would show me what to do. The Lord assured me He would answer my prayer, but not necessarily my way. I must not lay down the ground rules for answered prayer. When I finally saw this, I was so happy and satisfied. My vision and wisdom are so limited that I can not see all the possibilities. Yet God can see them all.

One day I walked into a room and found my little daughter putting a razor blade in her mouth. She had not yet closed her mouth. I wondered what to do. Knowing that she mimicked me so often, I smiled broadly and opened my mouth wide. She did the same. Walking toward her, I gently lifted the

blade out of her mouth. And when it was out I said, "It will cut you all to pieces!" Immediately she closed her mouth tight. She thought it was something good to eat. Daddy knew better!

When you and I are tempted to say, "Lord, do it this way," let us remember our Father knows best! He does not want to give us something that will hurt us and cut up our lives.

A lady, whose husband was in the army said, "O God, I demand that You bring my husband home to me safe and sound." God did bring him home, but how often she wished she might have asked for God's will to be done. This once kind, loving, sweet husband, came home, back-slid and went down in immorality. With bitter tears she realized that to demand of God is often to receive something we do not want. How important that we understand this basic rule of life and let our loving, all-wise God fulfill His promises His way!

Like a little child, with the faith of a little child, we are to come to God saying, "I believe You are fulfilling this promise, because You cannot lie. Thank You for having fulfilled this promise, because You love me."

Romans 8:32 says, "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" Don't you see, friends, that since God gave His best, would He withhold from us that which is of lesser value? God loves us and He is eager to answer our prayers in His best way, and at the best time.

While I was talking to the college students, answering their questions, I presented to them the things you have just read in this chapter. Then I said there was one more point I was anxious to share with them. I asked, "How many of you believe in the Bible?" They all raised their hands. Then I

encouraged them to say it out loud. I asked them to take the Bible in their hands and say, "I believe Your Word." This, you see, is pouring faith over His Word.

The next thing to do is to open the Word to a promise. It may be Philippians 4:19. You may be in need of financial help. God can and will respond. He has promised. And since we believe the Bible, we can believe His promise. Doesn't that make sense? And since we believe His promise, we can say: I believe, Lord, that You are fulfilling it.

We simply use the ABC's of prayer. "A" is "Ask," Matthew 7:7. "B" is "Believe," Mark 11:24. Say, "I believe." "C" is to "Claim," and then return thanks to God that we have received. This is receptive prayer. Most Christians are praying prayers of commitment, instead of prayers of reception. They are saying: Lord, forgive my sins if it be Thy will. That is an insult! We do not have to pray a prayer of commitment for the Lord to forgive our sins. He has already promised to do this through His Son, Jesus Christ. I can pray a prayer of reception and say: You promised to forgive me of my sins and cleanse me. I thank You for having done it, for I have confessed and I believe.

I can claim wisdom. I do not have to ask for it if it is His will. He has promised to give it to me if I ask. So when I ask for it, then I must believe He has given it to me, and then thank Him for having given it to me. This is the prayer of reception.

Let us pray: We thank You, Lord, for being our Saviour. We thank You that when we come to You, You will give us power to become the Sons of God if we believe on Your name. We ask You, for any heart who is not now Your son or daughter, but wishes to be, and quietly in his heart says, "forgive me for my sins," to make that one Your son or

daughter just now. We believe You are doing it as he, or she, believes. And we thank You, and receive it, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

> "As you read the promises, remember they are the expression of unutterable love and pity. The great heart of Infinite Love is drawn toward the sinner with boundless compassion. 'We have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins.' Ephesians 1:7. Yes, only believe that God is your helper. He wants to restore His moral image in man. As you draw near to Him with confession and repentance, He will draw near to you with mercy and forgiveness."—— *Steps to Christ*, page 55.

4

Infatuated

AGAIN, I would like you to notice seven Bible facts with me. Throughout these messages I repeat many of these facts. I do it because they are so important they bear repeating; for if we can firmly establish them in our thinking now, they will prove to be of tremendous value in the days to come. Notice these seven great Bible facts:

1. Jesus is coming again. Revelation 22:12, "And, behold, I come quickly."
2. Jesus is coming for those who are like Him. In 1 John 3:1-3, the third verse says, "And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure."
3. One of the features of being like Christ is to hate iniquity. Hebrews 1:9, "Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity."
4. This hatred is a promise from Christ. Genesis 3:15, "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel."

 This first promise of a Redeemer also contains a promise for man to be able to hate sin. This was a promise to make it possible

for man to hate the devil and all of his program. Why did God need to make a promise like this? Simply because at the time this promise was made, man had sinned and had become infatuated with the devil. The young human race loved sin. Man would always have loved sin had God not projected hatred for Satan into the human heart. There are still some people who say, "I'll repent whenever I get ready." This is impossible. Man can repent only as God gives him repentance. This is why it is so important to respond at the time one hears the Holy Spirit speaking. That is the time to act, for it is only God Who gives a man hatred for sin. It is only God Who puts enmity between man and the devil.

5. It is the Holy Spirit that accomplishes this. John 16:8, "And . . . he [the Holy Spirit] will reprove the world of sin."

 You see, it is the Holy Spirit Who reproves the world of sin. It is He Who brings to a person the hatred for sin in response to the earnest appeal in prayer. This is something for which we can all be very grateful.

6. He also gives man repentance for sin. Acts 5:31, "Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins."

 This also is a gift from God. He brings not only a hatred for sin, but He also gives repentance, through the working of the Holy Spirit upon the human heart. How very grateful we ought to be.

7. This is how He does it. Ezekiel 36:26, "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take

away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh."

The way God accomplishes this miracle of grace is to give us a new heart. This new heart is made in a way that makes it hate sin. The Holy Spirit, in making His entrance into this new heart, brings repentance and a complete restoration. Mankind has been given the invitation to accept this wonderful transformation. God promises to do it for you and for me.

We have been studying the prayer of reception and the prayer of commitment. A prayer of commitment is when we say, "Lord, if it be Your will." It is simply committing our lives into His will for us, concerning things of which we are uncertain. It is placing a human request, which is subject to error, before Him, and then asking His will to be done. I use this prayer when I pray for the sick, for I can not know if that person has fulfilled the conditions for answered prayer in his behalf. But if I am asking for wisdom for myself, I have a right to know, and I do know if I have fulfilled the conditions of answered prayer. Therefore I have wisdom, because God has given me a specific promise for wisdom (James 1:5). If I have fulfilled the conditions for answered prayer, and I ask for wisdom, for pardon for sin, for healing, or any promise He has given, then I can come to God and claim the specific promise without saying, "Lord, if it be Your will." No, I know God promises to forgive my sins if I have met the conditions. I must not pray, "Lord, if it is Your will, forgive my sins." I *know* He wants to forgive my sins because He has promised. Then I must believe that He does it. To pray differently is

sin. 1 John 5:10 says, "He that believeth not God hath made him a liar."

In Romans 14:23 Paul says that what is not of faith is sin. To ask God for forgiveness of sin *if* it is His will, is a prayer of commitment. And that is no place for that kind of a prayer. I know it *is* His will to forgive my sins, if I confess them. Here is the place I can pray the prayer of reception. You will remember we can offer the prayer of reception when we take a promise, and after fulfilling the conditions of answered prayer, ask God to fulfill the promise for us individually. We believe that He has fulfilled it. We go one step further and thank Him for *having answered* our prayer, and for our having received it. You see, reception in this case means: *I have received it.*

I am to take a promise of God for pardon for sin. As surely as I have asked: "Lord, forgive me," I am to say "I believe, and thank You, Lord, I *have* received forgiveness."

Years ago, my brother and I were selling books. He canvassed on one side of the road and I on the other. He came to a certain home where the man said, "I'm not interested in your book, but I have a book I'll *give* you."

"Well, thank you a million times," my brother replied delightedly.

At that, the man corrected, "Don't thank me a million times. Just thank me once and take it." It was not the number of times my brother thanked him that counted. The determining factor in my brother's getting the book was his reaching out and receiving it.

When we pray a prayer of reception, we are to reach right out and receive what we ask for, when we know God wants us to have it. And we can know that by reading the promises He has given in His

Word. We can then say, "Thank you Lord, I have received it." This may take some practice, because we are not used to saying it that way. Isn't that right? We are used to asking for something, "If it be Your will," when He has already told us it is His will. When we stop to think about that, it seems a little ridiculous. Doesn't it? Why, yes. Jesus came to save me, so I do not need to ask Him to save me *if* it is His will. I know before I pray that it *is* His will. I have a right to put my finger on Matthew 1:21 and ask Him to save me. Then I can claim the fact that He *has* saved me, if I believe what He says. I can then thank Him for having saved me, and that He will continue to save me each day. Salvation is a daily arrangement and commitment to God. We can say, I am saved, NOW—and believe it with all our hearts! Perhaps it might be better to say, He is saving me, now. Or better still, Christ is my Saviour. Christ is the Alpha and Omega of my salvation. He is the beginning and the end.

When we talk about eternal life, we can know and declare that we have eternal life. It is promised to us. Notice 1 John 2:25, "And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life." Here is where we have the promise of eternal life. Now I can say, "Lord, please give me eternal life." Then I can say, "Lord, I believe You have given me eternal life. I claim it, through Jesus, and I thank You I have received eternal life through Jesus Christ."

Sometimes we are prone, when asked if we have salvation, to say, "I hope so!" Isn't that something? To hope for something that has been promised us? I have a son. Now suppose someone would come to him and say, "I knew a Pastor Glenn Coon. Are you his son?" And he would say, "I hope so." Why, that would be an insult to both his mother and me, wouldn't it? Let us quit that doubtful hoping, and

say, "He *is* my Saviour. I know He is!" This is receptive communication.

When we talk about receiving forgiveness for our sins, we need not be in doubt about it if we have met the conditions for answered prayer. We can know, sure and certain, that we are free from the weight and penalty of sin. Jesus has promised it to you and me, and I believe Him. Don't you? This makes Christianity a joy. It is a delight now. I do not have to work myself up into a frenzy to be saved. All I have to do is to ask, believe, and claim what God has promised to give me. Oh, how thankful we ought to be for this beautiful arrangment.

What about this request to put enmity between us and that which is not for us? This fits the picture of infatuation. After I had gone through my Gethsemane experience, I determined to share it with all I could. I found such joy in putting my finger on a promise and receiving the answer, after I had asked, and expressed my belief in God for doing what He had promised, and then thanking Him for having received it. No wonder it says, "Enter thou into the joy of thy lord" (Matthew 25:21). Ever since then I have been telling many others of what I found. And believe me, this is fun! This is real joy! And if there is a people who can, and should be enjoying this kind of a real experience, it is a people who have entered into a solemn covenant to obey God. This is our right!

Like Paul, we can say, "I *know* whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day" (2 Timothy 1:12). We can say, "I know that my redeemer liveth" (Job 19:25). I know that I do not amount to much. But I know my God is infinite, and if I will let Him, He will make me a worthwhile tool in His hand.

It was not long after I decided to share this experience with others, that a young man in our church became infatuated with one of the young ladies of the area. This man was a married man with two lovely children and a beautiful, devoted wife. He was working at a hospital and became involved with a young nineteen-year-old girl. At first it was just innocent play, but it led to infatuation. They did not mean to become infatuated, but that is the way it often is. Do you know how people become infatuated? The innocent tap on the shoulder. The little touch here and there. Some people call it "puppy love." "If you want to keep from becoming infatuated, follow the rule: Hands off and three feet distance," my Father used to caution his eight sons.

The bigger part of yielding to temptation is proximity. The nearer we get to temptation, the more sure we are of yielding to it. The farther we keep away from the temptation, the safer we are. Greater distance means greater assurance of staying victorious. Some people wonder why they are always falling into temptation. The answer is simple. They get too close to it. Infatuation is just that way. The closer you get to someone you should not be near, the more possible it is for you to become infatuated. The sooner we learn to treat temptation like Jesus did, the sooner we are going to realize victory over it. He taught us to say, "lead us not into temptation."

When someone comes up to you married ladies and starts to become extra friendly with you, that is the time to take your leave. Now, of course, if you are both single, that is something else. You might even want to get better acquainted! But if either one is married, this friendship should never exist. The sooner you correct it, the happier you will be.

Well, this young man began to show attentions to this young woman. They became hopelessly infatuated. Now, in order to be consistent, he decided that he must divorce his wife. Obviously, he could not have two wives, and the wife he wanted was the nineteen-year-old.

It has been stated that eighty-five percent of the executives become infatuated with their secretaries. That is an amazingly high percentage. Isn't it? (Someone who read this statement angrily disclaimed it, so I apologize for quoting it.) Why do you suppose infatuation happens frequently? I will tell you one reason. The man leaves home in the morning and his wife has not been too pleasant, so he growls at her and he leaves with this attitude in his heart toward his wife. He comes to the office. His well-dressed secretary very pleasantly greets him, "Good morning, Mr. Smith." Now he did not have any plan to become infatuated with his secretary, but she was so pleasant and nice. She looked so clean and smelled so good. And the last thing he remembered about his wife was that she looked messy and sleepy, and just kind of growled at him as he was leaving the house. Of course, at the moment, he did not stop to think that he was paying his secretary $100 a week to be sweet. His wife would probably do it for $85. But his wife is on twenty-four-hour duty, with children to diaper, a house to clean, the dog to feed, and a hundred and one other chores that he expects her to do for nothing. The secretary gets a very good salary and it is much easier for her to be sweet when the boss walks in! But just wait until he marries the secretary, and she has to diaper his children, and she has to wash the clothes and take care of the dogs and all of the household chores! She will treat him just like his wife treats him now, and he will likely treat her the same! His wife loved him

when he was young, but the secretary gets him when he is old, and he and his secretary-wife prove to be more unhappy than the first marriage. Then there are the frustrated, broken-hearted children! No! Infatuation does not pay!

Well, this young man was going to divorce his wife and marry this young woman. A couple of the church members went over to see him and immediately began to scold him. You know, the word of the creature cannot begin to put enmity between two people when they are infatuated. It just cannot be done, especially not with scolding. It takes the immutable power of the promise of the Creator to cause people to fall out of love who should not be in love. God said, "I will put enmity . . ."

When I learned of the situation, I invited another pastor to go with me to visit this young man. We got to the house and found him working in his garden which was at the back of the house. His wife could be seen through the kitchen window doing her work and keeping busy with the children. She was a lovely little soul. We began to visit, and I told him why I was there. I assured him I wanted to say nothing that would offend him. I had not come to scold, but I wanted to help him. I told him I knew of a way by which he could have complete deliverance from the infatuation with the young woman. He assured me I need not be afraid of offending him, but he said, "I don't want to break off with this girl."

I was stumped. I wondered what I could do about a man who did not want to be released from a problem. You cannot force a man to stop sinning. Force will never bring enmity between two people and sin when they think they are in love. The Creator alone can bring this enmity, and He does it by giving the needy ones new hearts. That is the only way it can ever be accomplished.

I wondered now what I might do, and how I might use the ABC's of prayer in this situation. I thought of the promise in 1 John 5:16: "If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life." I wondered if that promise might be of help to me just then.

In the book *Testimonies to Ministers*, a book written by my favorite author, on pages 19 and 20, we read, "Omnipotence can not resist their [the true church's] plea for the salvation of any tried, tempted member of Christ's body."

I know that any of us can claim the promise of 1 John 5:16 and apply it as the Holy Spirit directs us, and people who should not be in love can fall out of love. This is what God has promised. But in this case the man did not want to. Now what should I do? Then the Lord helped me to ask, "Are you willing to be made willing?"

"Yes," he said, "I am willing to be made willing."

Then I thought of Philippians 2:13: "It is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." I offered an ABC prayer in my heart. I asked the Lord to make him willing, and God heard me. Then I asked, believed, and thanked God that this man would be willing to sever connections with this young woman.

Three minutes later he said, "Yes, I am willing to break up with her." Think of it! "But," he said, "she's not willing to quit." I asked him how he could be so sure of that. And then he told me the old story that perhaps most infatuated people have used. He said, "She has told me that if I leave her she will commit suicide." It usually does not mean much. It means, "I pity myself." A person who threatens suicide is crying for help, and wants you to pity him, too.

This young man was sure she would commit

suicide, and so he felt he could not drop her. "Well," I said, "I have something for you." I told him about the ABC's of prayer and shared with him some of the promises of the Bible. I told him about the fact that the promise contains the thing promised, just like the apple seed contains an apple tree. We thrilled at the clarity of the promises. I explained to him that if we ask, and then believe, and claim the promise by returning thanks that we have received the gift promised, God works wonders! I mentioned the promise that would help her to fall out of love with him.

"Where is that?" he asked.

"Genesis 3:15," I said. "Look at it! 'I will put enmity between thee and the woman.' " It fit perfectly, and he caught the point! I have found this about the Bible. So many of its promises fit multiple needs. This promise means that God will put enmity between the human race and the devil. If these people were not raising the devil, I would like to know what they were doing! So it fit! I was thrilled that God would do it, and I believed it and thanked God in my heart for doing it.

"Oh, I know she won't break up," he scoffed.

"I know she will," I replied. "In fact, let's get into the car and go right over and talk to her. I know she will do it." I was sure of it.

"Oh, I know she won't," he insisted.

"How do you know she won't?" I asked.

"Well, I tried it before. We promised we would break up, but it doesn't work," he concluded.

"*You* promised? Do you know what it is when *man* promises?" I said. "Why, that is the old covenant. What God promises is the *new* covenant! Moreover," I said, "you went under the old covenant, but we are going under the new

covenant." I assured him that God would be with us and that He would not fail us.

"Well, just suppose she won't break up. What then?" he asked.

"Don't you worry about that," I replied. "I'll take all the blame for it if it doesn't work out the way I'm sure it will."

"O.K. But I know she won't," he growled. But he went with us anyway.

It scares me now to think how sure I was that she would break up. The human will is a delicate instrument—so unpredictable! Since then I have wondered if this should not have been an "if it be Your will" prayer. But it *is* God's will that men turn from evil. And God impressed me to be definite and persuasive. There are times like this. Sometimes we must pray the prayer of reception that otherwise might be the prayer of commitment. The conditions at the time and the urgency of the situation determine that, and God knows all of this. God's Spirit surely guided me in declaring she would break up that very night. Otherwise I would have been presumptuous to have given a deadline.

We got into the car and were headed for this young woman's house. On the way I became frightened. What am I doing? I thought. I had promised this man that the young lady would break up, but I realized the fact that she had a sovereign will. This made me shiver in my shoes just a little. It seems as though the devil got right into the car with us and began to whisper to me, "How do you know she's going to be willing to break up? This is a pretty big statement you've made," and so on.

I began praying silently, and said, "Oh Lord, come to my rescue. You have said, 'Ask,' and I have asked. You have said, 'Believe,' and I believe. You

have said, 'Claim,' and I am claiming Your promise. I believe, too, that it is going to work out."

When we finally got there, the family had already gone to bed. The house was dark! And was that young man happy! "Oh, they have gone to bed. We had better not disturb them," he said. He was sure we would just turn around and go back home. But the Lord impressed me to go through with it.

"Oh no," I said. "They will wake up." With that, I opened the car door and bounded up the walk and climbed those stairs two at a time. I knocked at the door and breathed a little prayer to the Lord: "Lord, You have said, 'Knock and it shall be opened.' " Yes, this promise fits for this occasion. I asked God to let them hear me. I believed they would, and claimed the assurance of the promise.

Just then a rough voice inside said, "Who's there?" I told him who it was, and that I had come to help straighten out things between his daughter and the young man.

"She's gone to bed," he growled.

"She will wake up!" I called back cheerily. Right then I prayed, "Lord, You have said, 'Ask, and it shall be given you.' " I told the Lord I believed she would wake up, and thanked Him for having awakened her.

I could hear her father talking to her and asking her if she would be willing to get up and talk to us. She agreed to get dressed and come out. "Thank You, Lord," I said in my heart as we waited. Again I was impressed with the fact that these promises are placed here for our everyday needs. He wants to answer the prayers of our hearts.

It was not long until she had dressed sufficiently and came out, sitting in the back seat of the car. I did not know what to say. But I claimed another promise: "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of

God" (James 1:5). I needed lots of wisdom. I asked God to give me the right words to speak so that I would approach her in the right way. This was a delicate situation and I must have the finesse of heaven so as not to provoke any unwanted feelings. I realized I was dealing with the human will. I knew souls were at stake. Before I said anything, I thanked God for wisdom. I had asked, and I knew He had given it to me.

Turning to her with a smile, and with the most suaveness I ever mustered, I said, "We have come here in the interest of this young man's home. He has a lovely wife and two beautiful children, and we wondered if, in the interest of his home, you would be willing to break up?"

Without a moment's hesitation, she said, "Yes, sir." This happened in the Southeast where people are very gracious, and you do not always know that they mean what they say. I wondered if this might be one of those times. But she was so quick in responding that I thought perhaps she meant what she said. I looked over in the direction of the young man as she said, "Yes, sir," and his mouth dropped open. He had not expected this. I looked over in the direction of the young preacher and his mouth was open too. I think they looked at me, and I am sure my mouth was open also. She had said "yes" too quickly. I wondered how she could decide so fast.

Then the young man began to talk. He had not anticipated such a reply and became quite emotional. "But," he said, "I love you."

"Be that as it may," she replied, "we're through."

"But I love you very much," he insisted again.

"But we're through," she said, with real finality in her voice.

"But I've loved you for a long while," he said

again, and it sounded as though his voice was going to break with emotion.

"Yes, but we're through," she said. There was no question about her state of mind.

"Only a short time ago this evening," she continued, "I had a strong conviction that we should break up. And I decided right then that I must follow that conviction."

Friends, that was, I think, the very time we were claiming Genesis 3:15 at the young man's home.

"Let's get out of here," he exclaimed, and they both went up on the front porch while the young minister and I claimed Genesis 3:15. Only moments later the young man returned saying that she was holding strongly to her decision to break up.

The Lord had answered our prayer and there was no question about it in anyone's mind. We thanked the Lord for what He had done, and went home. That couple was broken up at that moment, and broken up for good. God had worked, just as He had promised He would. It all happened so quickly that it took me a moment to believe my ears and eyes.

I decided right there that I would tell this story everywhere I went. I have told it in colleges, in academies, and churches. Over and over when I have invited the young people to write out their questions, invariably someone says, "Tell me how to fall out of love." I always have them turn to the promise in Genesis 3:15. This is God's promise for hatred of sin.

In one school, a young lady shared an incident that had happened in the dormitory after I had related the story of this young couple. She told me how one of the young ladies had set her cap for a married man with two children. She was determined to have this man. Even after she realized that it was not right, she could not get this man out of her

mind. She was madly in love with him. So she called a group of girls to her room, and they opened their Bibles to Genesis 3:15 and claimed the promise just as she heard we had done with the young man and the young woman. After they prayed together, and this young lady asked God to adjust her affections, and then claimed the promise and returned thanks to God for having corrected her wayward emotions, they rose to their feet and this young lady embraced her friends, declaring that she had fallen out of love with the married man.

Now this young lady asked if my wife and I would visit with her. We told her we would, and when she was seated in our room, she asked, "Where do I go from here?"

"Go just as far away from him as you can. Do not go back to him to tell him you are through, because you are like a piece of steel going into the mouth of a magnet. Just keep your distance, and you will be alright. Get the message to him any way you want to. But you stay away." She thanked us and told us that was just what she would do.

Our son was at the same school and heard that series. The following year he returned to the same college and entered his senior year. He believed that girls and books do not mix too well. He had behaved himself very wisely. But now he was going to graduate, and he had been advised that if he was going to enter the ministry, he ought to be getting serious about the girls and find himself a wife. So he started looking around, and sent us a diary of his activities. Almost every day we received a letter. For nearly two weeks he had told us about a girl he had met, and although he knew she was not the girl for him, he was still infatuated with her. In fact, every time he saw her, his heart did a double flip. Now what it was about this young lady that made him so

sure she was not for him, I do not know; but as far as he was concerned, he knew that she would not be the one whom the Lord would have as his wife.

In a few days we received another letter in which he told of remembering the sermon that I had preached on falling out of love. He mentioned his desire to fall out of love and the frustration he was having accomplishing this. He said, "I remembered the promise of Genesis 3:15! I went to my room, opened my Bible and put my finger right on the promise and asked God please to put enmity between me and the infatuous feelings I had for this girl." He went on to tell how He prayed, and how he told the Lord he believed He would do it. "I claimed the promise and thanked the Lord that He had accomplished it for me.

"I got up from my knees and found that the Lord really had answered my prayer," he said. "But perhaps it had gone a little too far, for now I almost despised her!" He went on to say that he did not want to hate her, but rather that he wanted to love her as a Christian. Now my son thought of another text that would straighten him out. It was Romans 5:5 which says: "The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us." This made it possible for him to love her as a Christian, and yet not be infatuated with her. This is the power of God in the heart. God still answers prayers and delights to do so if it can glorify His name. I do not believe our son actually hated her, but the Holy Spirit's work was so sudden and certain that this was the way he at first interpreted it. The Holy Spirit causes us to love—but also helps us to turn strongly from a union which could inflict sorrow on our lives.

I want to tell you, we have a wondrous Book and a powerful God. In these closing days of earth's his-

tory, we have a right to go to God and claim any one of the 3,573 promises and more, that are to be found in the Bible. We can go on our way rejoicing.

Won't you, just now, reach for your Bible and open it to Acts 5:31? Notice that here God has promised to give repentance? "Him hath God exalted . . . to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins." God always gives forgiveness when He gives repentance. When God makes me sorry for my sins, it is a sign that He wants to forgive me. No one was ever made repentant that was not forgiven, if he only asked believingly. You might want to repeat this prayer in the quietness of your room. Place your finger on the promise as you pray:

Our Father in heaven, I thank You for this promise of repentance and forgiveness. And I ask You that You will give me repentance. I ask for forgiveness, also. I believe that You are doing it for Jesus' sake. I thank You that I have received repentance and forgiveness. In Jesus' name. Amen.

5

From Drunkard to Counsellor

NOW, WE want to turn to a very important passage of Scripture. It is, perhaps, the most significant passage of Scripture as it relates to you and me. We are involved in this passage! As you read it again, picture yourself in this setting. I refer to Revelation 14:6 and onward. Notice: "And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people."

God declares that there will be a message that will sweep the world. This message is called "the everlasting gospel." It is not some new concept of religious thinking, but rather a message that is of old, of everlasting, from the beginning of time. The gospel is the power of God to save men and women.

With this in mind, I would like to share with you an experience that has dramatically shown me the power of God on the human heart. The individual presented here was once a Christian, but, as you will see, lost her way as the result of a number of influences that were projected into her life. At the age of six she was introduced to the use of snuff. The vice became firmly established and held her in

its grip. In her teens she started to use alcohol. This, too, became a well established habit.

Somewhere along the line she came to know Sabbath-keeping people, and united with the church. For a short time she gave up both the use of snuff and alcohol. And then, just as suddenly, went back to her old habits. For many years she remained a member of the church, even though she was still enslaved by these habits. The church members, however, knew nothing of her problems. You can imagine the guilt she carried. Often she heard the pastor speak on the glorious return of Jesus. She heard 1 John 3:3 repeated on many occasions, and was reminded that those looking forward to the coming of Jesus will purify themselves and leave off unworthy habits. One can only imagine the guilt and remorse this dear soul must have suffered through the years.

Finally, one Sabbath morning, she heard a sermon that impressed her. She felt a deep desire to cut loose from these habits, and not knowing what else to do, she telephoned the pastor. He was a young man. She asked him to come to her home and visit about a problem she had. He responded immediately, and soon found himself listening to a story the like of which he had never heard. She told him of her habits and the grip they had on her. She confessed that she was a drunkard, and although she had tried many methods, nothing seemed to be able to give her victory. "I have now come to the place where I must have victory. Please help me!" she cried in anguish of spirit.

The young pastor was shocked. He never dreamed that she could be involved in anything like this. She was faithful in attendance at services, and active in many ways. He told her he did not know what he could do for her, but said he would talk to the church board about it and see what they might sug-

gest. Think of it! A snuff-dipper and a drunkard on the church rolls! He could hardly believe his ears! But there was no doubt in his mind since she had told him in very plain language.

The matter was brought up at the next church board meeting and they helped her alright—right out of the church! When there is an inability to help a person *up,* he is sometimes kicked *out.* The Bible makes it very plain that there is a time when a person ought to be disfellowshipped. But equally plain is the instruction that this is to be resorted to only when all other methods for restoration fail. Galatians 6:1 and 2 tells us, that if a brother be found straying from the path, the spiritual members of the church are to go to the erring one and endeavor to restore that one. Criticism will never be a part of that restoration process. Faultfinding and judging of motives is foreign to the program the Lord has designed for the restoration of erring members of the church. If I find some brother who is straying from the path of right, if I am spiritual, I will go and talk to him about it and keep our conversation confidential. This is very important, as well as being Scriptural. Notice the words of Proverbs 25:9, "Debate thy cause with thy neighbour himself; and discover not a secret to another."

Jesus Himself gave counsel that this ought to be done "alone" with the party involved. We are under a solemn obligation to keep the confidence of the one with whom we are discussing a problem. No one else need be brought into it. James 5:20 tells us that this procedure will "hide a multitude of sins." This method is divinely ordained to be the way to deal with the erring in the flock. Galatians 6:1 and 2 also indicates that the one going to help another must go in the spirit of meekness. Humility, the third horizontal level down, will characterize my ev-

ery action. I will not then condemn, but rather, I will let him know that I too have failed. But there is hope and victory through Jesus Christ our Lord. This is the gospel way!

In this case the church board had no prior knowledge of this woman's problem. She had told the pastor. He told the church board. From there it went to the church business meeting, where she was disfellowshipped.

Some time later we came to that city to hold a series of meetings. As the pastor was looking over a list of names to whom invitations might be sent, he noticed her name and decided she just might appreciate an invitation. We will call her Bertha. The pastor hesitated just a bit when he thought of the trouble he had already had with Bertha, and thought perhaps it better to pass over her name. But then he decided the meetings might possibly do her some good. So an invitation was sent to her.

Believe it or not, she came! She came to the opening service and was back again to the Sabbath morning and afternoon services. On Sunday night I invited anyone who wanted deliverance from any sinful habit, or anyone who would like to have special prayer for a problem, to meet me in the wing of the church after the service. Bertha stayed and met with a few others at the appointed place. We passed out some prayer cards on which provision was made for those who wanted deliverance from temper, criticism, tobacco or alcohol, et cetera, to indicate it. There were several items that could be checked. Bertha checked only the one that said she wanted to be a better Christian. The reason she did not check the squares indicating a desire to have help with alcohol and tobacco was that she had already been "indicted and sentenced" on those before. She did

not feel like admitting it again, only to incur further condemnation.

So many backsliders feel that very same way. They are unwilling to admit their failings because they are afraid of being helped "out" instead of being helped "up." The counsel is, "Ye which are spiritual, *restore* such an one" (Galatians 6:1). This is a command of God! Our commission is not to criticize or embarrass poor, struggling souls.

We cannot afford to indict or judge a soul if we expect to be of any help. The only time the Lord can use us to be of help to a needy heart is if we are willing to come in humility and recognize that we too have failed, and have needed the grace of God to rise above a temptation. When we can attest to victory, and give the positive assurance that we believe God will display His power in behalf of the needy one, only then are we ready successfully to offer our services.

After some years in the ministry, I was asked to pastor a certain church that was noted for its problems. It was not long after I arrived that I realized the reputation was well deserved. I wrote to the conference president and told him that I thought there were certain people who needed to be dealt with. He knew what I meant. He wrote a very nice letter in reply, but asked me what we were trying to do. Were we trying to help these troublesome people "up" or "out" of the church? This question made such an impression on me, I never forgot it. I realized there was a very real difference, and I asked the Lord to keep me ever sensitive to the need, and to help me be able to help people "up" along the pathway of life. The everlasting gospel has as an integral part of its message the desire to help. It is a message of healing for needy, bruised and broken

hearts. That is the message we preach. That is the message we have been commissioned to carry.

Going back to Bertha and the after-service she attended: when the service was over and the people had gone home, the pastor and I looked over the cards. As we came to the card bearing Bertha's name, the pastor stopped and told me the story I have just related. I suggested that we go and visit with her. He was somewhat reluctant because he did not want to get into any more trouble. But after discussing the situation, he agreed that it might be well if we did go to see her. And so, Tuesday morning we made our way to the home of Bertha, the drunkard.

We rang the door-bell. In just a moment she stood at the door and invited us in. That conversation lives in my memory as though it took place but yesterday. The first thing I did was smile and say, "Sister, we haven't come here to scold you." As I looked her in the eyes, I could see a visible sigh of relief. She began to relax when she realized that we had not come to condemn or embarrass her. However, she undoubtedly expected to be berated and scolded. Oh that we could learn the approach Jesus used and find the success He found!

I felt impressed to continue in this vein of thought. I said, "We have come to help you, because we love you as a Christian. Now, suppose you had been involved in an automobile accident and had lost a lot of blood. And suppose the doctor came in and examined you very carefully. Is it reasonable," I asked, "that he would stand by your bedside and scold you for your having lost so much blood?"

She looked at me, and in her timid way smiled as she shook her head, seeming to be unable to believe her ears that here were two ministers who were not going to scold her for having been a slave to these

habits for so many years. "No," she said, "I don't suppose he would."

"What do you think he would do?" I asked. She was a registered nurse and I knew she would know.

"I think," she said, "that he would order a transfusion."

The moment I heard her say that, I felt impressed to be an instrument in God's hand to give her a spiritual transfusion. So I exclaimed, "Sister, that is exactly what we have come to do!" I had never thought of the claiming of Bible promises as being a spiritual transfusion, but I felt impressed by the Holy Spirit that that is exactly what it is! I must have looked overjoyed as I told her of the victory she would receive that very hour as the result of the spiritual transfusion she was about to receive.

Bertha had already heard the ABC's of prayer in the meetings she had attended. She was acquainted with the fact that "A" stood for "ask," "B" for "believe," and that "C" meant "claim" by thanking God we have received. She knew that! She had listened to these ABC's of the promises of God's Word, and realized that each step was important to victory. But we sat there and reviewed it all together, and thrilled to realize how simple, and yet how powerful, it was.

"Now," I smiled, "we are going to take a promise just for you. And as we put our finger on this promise of Matthew 1:21, which says, 'Thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins,' we are going to ask Jesus to save you. Now, as we ask Jesus to save you, we are going to think of the transfusion needle as piercing the skin and reaching into the vein." We turned to John 6:53, and I suggested that the statement in this verse was the reason for our thinking of this process as a

transfusion. Then I read, "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you." "Now," I continued, "so you will be able to make the parallel with the blood transfusion, we are going to read John 6:63. 'The flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.' "

Very quickly she saw that the 63rd verse explained the 53rd verse. She saw that the life blood mentioned in verse 53 is in reality the Word of God. She saw that to ask for salvation from the power of sin was God's will. That the way is by the transfusion of His life through the medium of His Word, the Bible. Now we could kneel, and with our finger on the promise, we could imagine the flow of blood being turned on as we asked God to fulfill this promise. "Imagine the blood flowing into your veins," I said, "as we place this request before the Lord in prayer." Again I invited her to believe that God was doing this very thing. We would then return thanks to God for having done it.

"How long does it take to give a transfusion?" I asked.

"Oh, about an average of forty minutes, more or less," she replied.

"We are not going to hurry either. We will just take our time," I smiled. I then tried to help her to see that it was impossible for her, in her own strength, to find victory over these, or any other bad habits. We turned to Romans 7:14, and saw there how, because of our carnal nature, we are incapable of meeting the standard of the spirtual law by ourselves, simply because we are sold to the program of the devil. I told her about the early American days of slavery, and how an unhappy slave one day decided to run away from his master. But when he got beyond the master's property, he did not

know where to go. Whoever would see him would know that he was a slave because he had been sold into slavery. He was a slave and everyone would know that he belonged to someone. There was no place where he would be free. Sooner or later he must return to his own master. This is our condition in sin. We are sold into sin because we are a part of the human family. As such, we do not deserve a scolding. Rather, we need to help each other in love and understanding.

Belittling a criminal will never release him from prison. You can go to him and remind him of all the evil things he has said and done. You can berate that man all you want, but it will never release him. What does he need? He needs the key to that cell door. This is the only thing that will get him out. Why is it we cannot make the transfer of principle to our daily lives? We seem to think that when a man has done something wrong and has become entangled in the snares of Satan, that what he needs is a good scolding.

"Now," I continued, "we have seen the condition that we all find ourselves in. Romans 7:14 has made that very clear." Then I pointed her to the 15th verse and we read it together: "For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I."

When we read this verse together, she looked up and smiled and said, "This is my problem right here! I do not want to do these things at all. I honestly do not want to. But I still do them."

"I know," I consoled. "But the reason you do them is because you are a slave." I pointed out that there were many things that I also had done that made me unhappy. But again I pointed out that we are all slaves of sin. And as slaves, we do not need scolding, but we need the keys to set us free.

"Since we can not help ourselves," I said, "but since Jesus can, we are going to kneel in prayer and put our finger on Matthew 1:21 which promises that Jesus will save us. And as we pray, we will use the ABC's of prayer. We will ask God to save you and release you from the enslavement of these habits. Then we will exercise faith, and tell God that we believe He is doing it right now. We will claim the promise as God has given it by thanking Him for having given you victory and salvation."

I invited the pastor to lead in prayer. I would pray next, and after I prayed it would be Bertha's turn. She bashfully admitted she had never prayed in public before and that she was a little nervous trying it now. But I assured her that this was not "public" and it would be of real benefit to her to engage in this prayer service. She consented to do it and even felt relaxed about it. I suggested, too, before we knelt, that we would mix faith with our prayer. Just before we knelt in prayer, I turned to Romans 10:10 and read: "For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."

"You see," I said, "you will believe that the Lord is giving you victory. Then with your mouth you will confess that it has taken place. Don't be afraid to say it. Belief," I said, "is essential to salvation; for the Bible says, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved' (Acts 16:31)—saved from sin."

So we knelt. First the pastor prayed. And he prayed a most beautiful prayer in simplicity, in which he confessed that we all have sinned, and that all of us have become slaves to sin. He included each of us in that prayer. "Now, here is a promise, Lord," he said, "that Jesus will save us from our sins. I ask You now, Lord, to save Bertha and give

her victory over these habits. I believe that You are, on the basis of these promises, saving her." Then he continued by saying, "Lord, I claim this salvation for her by returning thanks unto You that You *are* doing it."

I felt the presence of the Holy Spirit as this pastor prayed. He was praying a prayer of reception. He was claiming what God had promised. Since God cannot lie, I knew He was going to answer this request as surely as Bertha believed. When Bertha's turn came to pray, this is what she said: "Dear Jesus, I don't ask You to save me just from alcohol and tobacco, but I ask You to clean me all up. Amen."

That was a beautiful prayer and offered so sincerely, but she had left the "B" and "C" out of the prayer altogether. I thought for a moment that I ought to have her include them in her prayer, but then I remembered how timid she was, and thought it might embarrass her. I did not want to do that, so just as soon as she said, "Amen," I continued her prayer by saying, " . . . and Lord, we believe You are doing it. And we want to thank You for delivering Bertha completely."

I got just that far when Bertha remembered what we had decided on before we knelt to pray. It was that she would forget about us, and just open her heart to God. So she interrupted my prayer. "Dear Lord, You do love me, don't You? I didn't know that You loved me. I'm so glad You do love me . . ."

Why do you suppose she prayed that kind of a prayer at this time? Could it be because of Pharisaical Sabbath-keeping Christians? Perhaps someone has made a mistake. We feel a burden to go to him and belittle him, instead of saying, "I've come to be of help and comfort and courage to you. Let's

pray it through and tell it to no one." Too often we feel the urge to "give it to him right from the shoulder." Then report it next Sabbath morning as *one missionary visit!* It may be a missionary visit alright, but it cannnot be counted as being made for the Lord. No, No!

This poor woman may have had that type of a visit, causing her to lose all sight of the fact that God loved her. But here in the presence of the love of God that filled the room, the Lord enabled us to help her see that He still loved her. In the quietness of that moment the impact of His love broke through, and she realized it with clarity and power. It broke her all up. She wept for joy.

Then she continued, "Thank You, Lord. You *have* delivered me."

As we arose to our feet, I gripped her hand and said, "Sister, not because you feel it, but because God has promised, do you believe that you have victory?" I wanted to have her say it again, realizing that confession of belief is so important to lasting victory.

"I know He has given me victory. I *know* it!"

"Now, to whom are you to give the credit for your victory?" I asked.

"Well, I do want to thank you both for coming to see me."

"And we are thankful that we could have the opportunity of coming. But the Lord has said that He will not share His glory with another, and so you must give God all the glory."

"Yes, I know," she said. "God is the one Who has given me victory through the power of Jesus."

"That's exactly right," I assured her. "It was in Jesus' name that we claimed the promise, and He has come to deliver you." Then I directed her to tell others about the marvelous deliverance she had re-

:eived. "When people see you in the market and ask 'ou why you are so happy, tell them Jesus has deliv-:red you from alcohol and tobacco. Don't mention ny name at all. Wherever you go, and whoever asks 'ou why you are so happy, tell them of your deliv-:rance through the power of the name of Jesus. But lo not mention our names. Begin immediately."

She agreed to this, and her face bore testimony to he fact that she had found something for which he had been desperately searching. I then reminded ier that continued victory depended on her villingness to believe and share the experience that he had had. Share immediately. Do not wait even ne day.

In that church we had organized Victory Clubs. Whenever someone received the victory over a abit, realizing that the devil would move in and ry to discourage, we arranged for two church nembers to drop in and have prayer with that one very so often. Two hours from the time we left, wo ladies stopped by and read a passage of Scrip-ure and prayed with Bertha. They used the ABC's f prayer just as we had done. Then they put their rms around this lady and demonstrated the love hat is so necessary when victory has been experi-nced. Soul-winning is soul-loving. That is why it is mportant to have your wife with you as you visit. A man needs to have another man's warm hand-lasp, or encircling arm to let him feel that we re-oice with him in his victory. A lady needs to have nother lady put her arm around her at this critical ime. This procedure was repeated every three or our hours. These ladies did not scold or condemn. They merely demonstrated love in action. They ame so that they might rejoice with her in her vic-ory. Each couple stopped to give thanks to God for

the victory she had had. This was continued for several days in succession.

A few days later we visited the home again just to see how she was progressing, and to see if perchance anyone had scolded her. When I inquired how she was doing and whether or not the ladies had come by, her face beamed as she told of the love and understanding they had shown. She was very happy! I was happy too, not only because Bertha had experienced victory, but because a change had taken place in the lives of the members of the church who visited her, prayed with her, and loved her.

The following Sunday night two alcoholics were present at the after-service. They had come in response to an invitation extended by two members of the church. Now these two alcoholics were not ordinary alcoholics. The neighborhood, on several occasions, called the police officers two or three times in a single day because of the disturbance they caused. They needed help desperately. They attended the evening service and now here we were in the after-service. Each one signed a card and indicated the area in which he most needed help. Both of these individuals signified their desire for deliverance from alcohol.

Somehow Bertha found out about the problem these two people had, and very quietly she slipped over to where the lady sat and gently took her hand. Bertha was going to begin to witness right then and there. I could hear her saying as she patted her hand and looked into her eyes with understanding love, "I was one of the worst drunkards in all the city. Jesus helped me to overcome, and He will help you too. Just ask Him for help. Then believe He will help you, and claim the promise that Pastor Coon has shared with us. And then ... and then ... and

then—you will thank Him for having given you the victory!" Her countenance beamed as she spoke to this lady. You could tell she was speaking from experience. Tears trickled down the cheeks of both women. The husband looked on, visibly moved.

It was ten days before our busy program would allow us to visit in the home of these two alcoholics. I was anxious to learn what had happened. I did not want to express doubt, so I began, "Isn't it wonderful what the Lord does for us?" They agreed kindly, but said nothing. I still did not know whether they had gotten the victory over drink, and I did not want to ask. So I continued, "Isn't it wonderful how the Lord gives us victory?" Again they agreed, but did not declare their victory. So, with a smile I asked, "Just how long has it been now since *you* have had any alcohol?"

"The last we drank was ten days ago." They smiled. "Not a single drop since we attended your meetings!" Both of them looked so clean and neat—and so happy!

I, too, felt happy and wanted to shout and praise the Lord for what He had done. The story does not end there. Bertha continued to be an inspiration to this couple, and they continued to have victory. Bertha was also an inspiration to others. A few days after this experience, I overheard Bertha in the lobby of the church talking with a stranger. I edged a little closer so I could overhear their conversation without appearing inquisitive. The lady was asking Bertha the secret of victory over alcohol. Bertha was sharing with her the ABC's of prayer. She did it beautifully in sweet, humble simplicity, yet with deep assurance and conviction. She spoke from experience, and I could tell that the lady listening sensed it. Oh what a story of deliverance she had to share!

This is part of the everylasting gospel that will go to all the world. And when it is received into the heart, it will change men and women so that they become like Jesus. Isn't it a wonderful thought, that regardless of our problems, Jesus has the answer? He wants to answer the earnest request of your heart. He can, and will do it for you.

Will you offer this prayer right now in the quietude of your home, your car, or wherever you are?

Dear Lord, "I am carnal, sold under sin." But I believe Jesus will "save his people from their sins." I ask for this deliverance. I believe that since it is "impossible for God to lie," You are now delivering me, and I hear You saying, "believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them." So I return thanks that I *have* received, not because I feel it, but because You have promised. In Jesus' name. Amen. (See Romans 7:14; Matthew 1:21; Hebrews 6:18; Mark 11:24.)

"This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." 1 John 5:4.



6

Walking Away with Victory

NOW I want to discuss with you in this chapter the importance in our prayer life of giving thanks to God that we *have received* any promise we are claiming, that He has made, even before there is any external evidence of its fulfillment. This is all tied up in the glorious experience of walking away with victory.

The first text that I would direct your attention to is Zechariah 12:8: "In that day shall the Lord defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and he that is feeble among them at that day shall be as David; and the house of David shall be as God, as the angel of the Lord before them."

This text of Scripture declares that the day is coming when men and women who are feeble will be like David in his strength. And those who are normally like David will be like God. 1 John 3:1-3 declares that when Jesus comes again, those who are ready to go back to heaven will be like Him. This text says that there will be men and women who will be like God and like the angel of the Lord walking up and down this earth with victory in their hands and in their hearts. I believe with all my heart that the "C" of prayer is very important if we are going to walk away with victory and be

the means of helping others to experience the same.

By way of review: the "A" of prayer is "Ask." Jesus invites us to "Ask, and it shall be given you" (Matthew 7:7). The "B" of prayer is "Believe." "What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them" (Mark 11:24). The "C" of prayer is claiming the promise by returning thanks that we have the answer *before* we have any sign that we have received it, except the promise that is found in God's immutable Word. (See Hebrews 11:1; John 11:41-44.) The "C" of prayer is the difficult part of the prayer program. Many find this part almost impossible to accept.

Most people must see the evidence of God's answer to their prayer *before* they believe. They are not satisfied to believe that what God says is so, and that He will do it simply because He has said He would. Herein lies the reason for the failure on the part of so many.

Many years ago, I prepared a talk for one of our camp meetings. My heart was full of the subject we now have under discussion. I felt there was a real need for an understanding of reaching out and accepting God's promises on the basis of His word, in spite of not seeing a visible answer. I titled my sermon, *Talking Your Way into Salvation.* I used as my text, Romans 10:10: "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."

You notice it says, "unto salvation," not because of salvation. There is a real difference! We take God at His word, and declare that we have received what He promises us. This attitude is acceptable to God. Then God performs His part and gives to us what we have, by our proclamation, said that we have already received. This takes faith—real faith.

An example of that kind of faith is demonstrated in the account of the visit of the angel to Mary, who was to be the mother of Jesus. Mary was told she would become the mother of the Saviour of the world. She did not understand *how* this could be. There was no outward evidence that would lead her to know for certain that it could, or would, be accomplished—nothing but the word of the angel Gabriel. And even though Mary could not see logically how this event could take place, she replied: "Be it unto me according to thy word" (Luke 1:38).

Here Mary was accepting a promise as though it had already been fulfilled. Had Mary taken any other attitude than this, she never would have become the mother of Jesus. Christ was the Word of God made flesh, and He was made flesh by her accepting the word of God for her soul. Her attitude of acceptance was of vital importance to the accomplishment of the miracle of the incarnation.

All through the Bible are to be found incidents where God accepted the expression of faith on the part of mortal man. Hebrews, chapter 11, is filled with this. In each case, faith is the center of success. In each case it says, "by faith," and again, "by faith." Notice this example, verse 30: "By faith the walls of Jericho fell down." Here the falling of the walls is credited to the substance, faith. But when you turn to the book of Joshua and read the 6th chapter and the 5th verse, it states that God promised the people if they would march around the city once each day for six days, and then seven times on the seventh day, the walls would fall down flat. The instruction was simple, but very definite. On that seventh day, after they had marched around the city seven times, the people were to shout. What were they to shout? They were to shout, indicating victory—that the walls were going to fall down!

Joshua 6 records that Israel followed the instruction of the Lord. On that seventh day they all marched again. Once, twice, three times. Nothing happened. After the sixth time around the city wall there was not even so much as a crack in the wall! But when they marched around it the seventh time, the people continued to exercise faith. They shouted, indicating that they believed God's promise. But notice, they had to shout *first*, not *after* the wall fell! Verse 20 tells us how God fulfilled His word. The word faith is not mentioned, however, in the entire 6th chapter of Joshua. But in the 11th chapter of Hebrews, it says that the walls fell down as a result of the faith of Israel. God accepted their actions of faith and their words of faith as faith itself. But notice again, God accepted these as faith only after they had *acted* and *spoken*. It was only after they had given a practical demonstration of their belief in the promise of God.

This is so different from the way many do things today. Is it not? Most of us withhold our expressions of faith until *after* the proimse has been fulfilled. Instead of living by faith, as God says the just will do, we are prone to live by sight. This is not pleasing to God and is the reason why the church is so weak. We wait and say, "When we *see* it, Lord, we will thank You for it." This is not God's plan for us. He would have us accept His promise on the basis of His word, *before* we see the fulfillment.

The experience of Gideon provides another example of faith. In Hebrews 11:32, Gideon is mentioned along with the other illustrious men of faith. What did he do to warrant being in this lineup of giants of faith? Judges 6 tells us.

Gideon was instructed to arm each of his men with a trumpet, a pitcher, and a lamp. They were to *do* things and *say* things. Success depended on their

willingness to obey the command of God. The 7th chapter of Judges records the fact that Gideon and his chosen three hundred men followed explicitly the word of God. This very small band of men were to descend upon the Midianite camp, and at a given signal were to break their pitchers, blow their trumpets, and shout, "The sword of the Lord, and of Gideon." Not until they did what God told them to do, and spoke what God told them to speak, did He fulfill the promise in such a way that they could see it. When Gideon and his army demonstrated their faith in God, God manifested His power, and an overwhelming victory was theirs. It could have been accomplished in no other way!

This principle is carried through all of the Old Testament, and the New Testament as well. Let us study this a little further, and notice two more incidents. The first is recorded in 2 Chronicles, chapter 20. This chapter begins by telling us that Jehoshaphat is in trouble. Great armies have gathered themselves together, and are coming to fight Jehoshaphat. Jehoshaphat is afraid. He proclaims a fast throughout all Judah. Verse 4 says that Judah gathered themselves together to ask help of the Lord. You will notice it says they *asked* help of the Lord. Verse 5 and onward record the prayer that Jehoshaphat prayed, in which he recognizes God as the supreme Ruler of heaven and earth; the One in Whose power former victories had been won.

He then quotes back to God a promise, in substance, recorded in 1 Kings 8:33-40. This passage of Scripture is a portion of the prayer of Solomon on the occasion of the dedication of the temple. Solomon presented this prayer as a request to the Lord.

In 1 Kings, chapter 9, the Lord says that what Solomon, in his prayer, asked of the Lord would be done. In other words, Solomon's request *to* the Lord

became a promise *from* the Lord. Jehoshaphat knew this, and, with his people, bowed in prayer. He came to God with this promise: "If, when evil cometh upon us, as the sword, judgment, or pestilence, or famine, we stand before this house, and in thy presence, (for thy name is in this house,) and cry unto thee in our affliction, then thou *wilt hear and help*" (2 Chronicles 20:9, referring to 1 Kings 8).

He presented to the God of heaven His own promise, saying: Lord, this is what You promised. We are in trouble now and need Your help. In verse 12 he states it this way, "O our God, wilt thou not judge them? for we have no might against this great company that cometh against us; neither know we what to do: but our eyes are upon thee."

Notice that Jehoshaphat came to the Lord confessing that they in themselves were unable to meet this army. There was no question in his mind but that God would help them. But he came to God with the *assurance* that He would come to their aid, because He had promised. This was the basis of petition. God had promised to come to their aid when in trouble. Jehoshaphat simply believed God!

When we take our eyes off ourselves and place them on God, as the children of Judah did, and come to Him for the answer to our problems, then we have a right to claim what God has promised. It is simply because the promise was made by God. And God cannot lie. He will always fulfill His part of the promise if we will in humility come to Him and accept His promise on that basis. And being our Creator, He is able to fulfill His word.

Notice now how the promise was fulfilled. In verse 20 it says, "And they rose early in the morning, and went forth into the wilderness of Tekoa: and as they went forth, Jehoshaphat stood and said,

Hear me, O Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem; Believe."

"Believe," was the burden of the message of Jehoshaphat. He wanted to impress upon the people that this message had come from the Lord God of heaven. He had made the promise. In effect he said: If you believe God and His prophets, you will have success. But belief was primary. This was the all-important ingredient to realize success.

Jehoshaphat had asked according to God's promise. He had focused his eyes on God. Now he says to the whole army and company of people—"Believe ... believe." Without believing in what God had said, there could be no success. It is still so today.

My favorite author suggests in *Testimonies*, Vol. 5, page 514: "Say, 'I will believe, I do believe that God is my helper,' and you will find that you are triumphant in God."

When am I to tell Him I believe? *Before* I have any external evidence whatsoever! This is the hard part. Here is where we so often fail in meeting the requirements for outstanding victories and accomplishments.

Now note the tremendous things that Jehoshaphat did. In olden days the armies had a victory song. Each army had its own special victory song. But this song was sung *after* the victory was won. Not so with Jehoshaphat. He had his choir sing the victory song *before* they engaged in this battle. Notice: "And when he had consulted with the people, he appointed singers unto the Lord, and that should praise the beauty of holiness, *as they went out before the army*, and to say, Praise the Lord; for his mercy endureth for ever" (2 Chronicles 20:21).

Jehoshaphat sang the victory song as they went into battle that armies usually sang when they re-

turned *from* the battle. When they claimed, by returning thanks to God, that they had received it, notice what happened: "And when they began to sing and to praise, the Lord set ambushments against the children of Ammon, Moab, and mount Seir, which were come against Judah; and they were smitten. For the children of Ammon and Moab stood up against the inhabitants of mount Seir utterly to slay and destroy them: and when they had made an end of the inhabitants of Seir, every one helped to destroy another" (verses 22 and 23).

God came to their aid when they asked His help; when they demonstrated belief in His promise, and claimed the answer by returning thanks to Him that they had received. This all took place *before* they had any *external* evidence that God had heard them. They were using the ABC's of prayer! Indeed they were! And when they did this, He turned their enemies against each other, as He did in the case of Gideon and his enemies. The victory that God gave was complete. (See 2 Chronicles 20:24.) Out of this horde of men who had armed themselves against God's people, the verse says, "none escaped!" God gave the people more than just a decisive victory. He gave them spoil so great that it took three days to carry it away. Our God is a generous God as well as a powerful God. We can, without question, walk away with victory in the face of any problem. This is the way God works. He has in the past and He will again today!

In the book *Early Writings,* page 72, we read: "True faith lays hold of and claims the promised blessing *before* it is realized and felt." [Emphasis supplied.] True faith claims the promised blessing. This is the "C" of prayer. Notice: "We must send up our petitions in faith within the second vail, and

let our faith take hold of the promised blessing, and claim it as ours."—*Ibid.*

This is the "C" of answered prayer. Not only are we to *ask* God for big things, difficult requests, but we are to reach up and *claim* them as ours. This is the divine plan. And only as we relate ourselves to this, in the way God has ordained, can we expect to receive the answer that is waiting for us. It is so simple, yet so important that we do it *God's* way.

"What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them" (Mark 11:24). This is faith. Naked faith! This is belief in answered prayer. This is believing before any indication is given that the answer has come. This we must put into practice if we are going to experience all that God has in store for us. If we will do this, we can walk away with victory!

In Mark, chapter 5, is recorded the story of a woman who had been sick for twelve long years. She had spent all she had in an attempt to get well. But all efforts failed to bring her relief. Now she hears of Jesus. Somehow in her heart is born the conviction that if she can but touch His clothes, she will be whole. Notice her expression of words of faith: "If I may touch but his clothes, I shall be whole" (Mark 5:28).

That woman put her ABC's all in one sentence. Didn't she? It does not make a great deal of difference exactly how we say them, as long as we will follow through and ask, then say that we believe. This is very difficult for most people to say. They find it almost impossible to express belief in something they have not tested, tried, and seen with their eyes. And then to claim the promise and return thanks to God for having answered, before any external evidence is seen, is not easy. But it is God's way!

A man came to our home when I was a little boy, who put the ABC's all in one sentence. He said, "I thank you for passing the bread." We boys wanted to snicker. We had always asked someone to pass the bread. Then when we saw it coming, we believed we would receive it, and thanked whoever was passing it. But this man thanked whoever would pass the bread *before* he saw it moved from its place on the table.

That is how Jesus used the ABC's of prayer at the grave of Lazarus, as found in John 11:41-43. "Father, I thank thee that thou has heard me. . . . Lazarus, come forth."

The woman with the issue of blood did this, and she was healed instantly. Paul and Silas did the same in the prison at midnight. They thanked God for delivering them before ever a chain fell from their limbs. But when they thanked God, the very walls shook and the chains fell from all the prisoners. This is what happens when we follow God's plan! The prison keeper was so impressed, he wanted to know of the power that attended these two men. He was instructed, and became a follower that very day. He was a converted man. It was due to the display of the power of God in response to the request and faith of Paul and Silas.

During the time I was struggling to grasp this concept for myself, and put it into practice, a young man came to me. I had performed the marriage ceremony for him and his bride just a few days before. This boy's mother was a good member of the church but his father was not. "I have a problem," he said, "and I wonder if you would help me?" He was to return to the service in a few days, but had this problem on his heart. He told me about his father who, he said, would be coming to see me shortly. The father was a very timid man and the son was

afraid that he would not come to grips with the issue, and so wanted to tip me off before the father came.

"My father smokes," the young man confided. "He has tried to stop smoking on several occasions, but each time he stops, he begins to hemorrhage at the nose. He gets violent nosebleeds, and because of this my mother has told him she thinks he will never be able to stop. He is coming to see you about this problem."

My first thought was, What can I do? I had never heard of a thing like that before. I had never heard of a man afflicted with nosebleed when he stopped smoking. But then I thought, "Is any thing too hard for the Lord" (Genesis 18:14)? Of course I had to admit I did not believe there was anything too hard for the Lord. But I wondered just how He would take care of this particular problem.

A few days later I was washing my car in the driveway and up walked this young man's father. He was a large man. He talked about the weather and made a bit of small conversation. I invited him into the house, and it was not long before we got into his problem. He told me frankly that he wanted to get rid of the tobacco habit.

"Alright," I said, "Here is what you do. Take the promise of Matthew 7:7, 'Ask, and it shall be given you.' " Continuing, I asked, "If I pay for something, is that a gift?"

"Why, no," he answered.

"A lot of us think we have to earn salvation," I said. "But the Lord says, 'Ask, and it shall be *given* you.' We have a right to come to the Lord and claim the promise of salvation, since God has already paid for it on Calvary. He has already bought it. We are merely to receive what God has given. The blood of Jesus is the purchase price." (See 1 Peter 1:18, 19.)

Then I gave him a number of case histories, just as we have been reviewing together here. When it came time for us to pray, I told him that we were not merely going to *ask* for deliverance, but we were going to *receive* it. We knelt to pray. Both of us prayed. When we arose from our knees I gripped his hand and said, "Now, Brother, not because you feel it, but because God has promised it, has He delivered you from tobacco?"

"Yes, sir," was his quick and firm reply.

He said it so quickly that I wondered if he knew what he was saying. "Wonderful," I said, or words to that effect, but I was not sure that he knew what he was saying. I thought he might just go home and tell his wife that the preacher prayed for him but nothing happened, and his wife would say, "Well, I knew it wouldn't." So I claimed James 1:5 because I needed wisdom right then to know what to do. I wanted to exercise faith because I knew how important that was. But I was not sure that this man was going to walk away with victory. And so I said, "Look, I'm going to go home with you, and I'm going to tell your wife of the wonderful victory you have gained." I had two purposes in mind. One was to impress upon his mind that he had received victory. The other was to impress his wife with the fact that he had received victory, so she would not talk doubt.

On the way to his house I thought more about meeting his wife. I knew that she could talk more doubt in five minutes than I could talk faith in an hour. And I began to tremble in my shoes. So I prayed. He did not know that I was praying. But I was praying, "Lord, help me to talk faster than a woman!" The Lord had answered that prayer for me before, and I believed He would do it again. So I planned from the moment I stepped into their house

I was going to smother that woman with faith. I would smother doubt with faith.

When we arrived at the house, we walked through the front door and there she was in the middle of the living room. Instantly I began enthusiastically, "Sister, rejoice with us. God just gave your husband complete victory over tobacco!" Well, you know, she was so shocked that she just stood there and looked at me. And for a moment I lost my tongue and did not say a word either. We just stood and looked at each other. It seemed like the longest few minutes. Now I wanted her to say something first. I did not know which way to move, and I did not want to move the wrong way. Yes, I could see she was about to speak. She began slowly, pensively, earnestly: "Pastor, I wish while the Lord is giving victory, He would give *me* victory too."

"Give *you* victory?" I asked incredulously but kindly, so as not to reveal shock. "Victory over what?"

Then she told me that she was a slave to coffee. I do not recall all the details, but I think she called her affliction "coffee heart." She knew coffee was harmful to her, and it seems that her doctor told her that unless she quit this habit, it was going to kill her. But she could not quit, although she had tried many, many times. She told me that every time there was an altar call made at the church she had gone forward, earnestly pleading for deliverance, but to no avail.

"I have gone to my closet and fallen on my knees and begged God to deliver me," she said. "I have sobbed out my prayer, but then gone right back and had another cup of coffee. I keep the coffee pot on the stove twenty-four hours a day," she sadly added. I could tell she was speaking with great emotion. "I just can't quit," she repeated.

I wondered just what I should say. Then the Lord came to my rescue. I said, "Sister, just suppose your son came home, and he was in desperate need of five dollars. Not for spending money. He desperately and honestly needed five dollars. Now if you had the money, would you give it to him?" I asked kindly.

"Why, yes. Of course I would," she answered with a questioning countenance.

"And when you would hand out the five dollar bill, what would you think of your son if he put his hands behind his back and kept pleading? I dare say you would not be too well pleased, would you?"

"No, I guess I wouldn't," she answered, evidently wondering what this had to do with her coffee problem.

"Now," I smiled, "you have asked for victory over your habit, but you have never reached up and taken what God is offering to you." She saw what I was telling her was true. She saw that she was failing to do something that was very important. She was praying only one third of an ABC prayer. She had asked. But she had not believed and returned thanks that she had received victory.

"Now let us kneel and pray," I said. When we knelt, we put our finger on a promise and asked God to give her the victory. She prayed a most earnest prayer and it was evident that she really wanted victory. When we rose to our feet, I stepped over to her and said, "Sister, not because you feel it, but because God has promised, has He given you victory over the coffee habit?"

And all she could say was, "Uh . . . uh . . . uh. . . ."

What was she doing? She was fighting the "fight of faith." Did she dare to tell God that He had given her what she had sought for years and had never received? Did she dare to? The devil said, "Don't do it." God said, "Do it!" Finally she won

out in her fight of faith with a deep-breathed, "Yes."

Again, I repeated the same question. I wanted to have her impressed with her decision. "Sister, not because you feel it, but because God has promised, has He delivered you?" This time it came a little easier. She still struggled, and finally, and in a shorter period of time said, "Yes."

Once again, as I took her hand, I repeated the same question. Only this time she responded with firmness and relief. I replied, "According to your faith be it unto you," as Jesus promised. (Matthew 9:29.) I assured her that I believed with all my heart she was delivered. And God had delivered her, definitely. The next Sabbath morning I saw her at church and she fairly ran over to meet me. Had I been a woman, she would have hugged me. She said, "Pastor, it works! It works!" Some time later when we were about to move on to another church, at the farewell party they held in our honor, she came over to where my wife and I were sitting. She spoke of that day in her living room and the victory she had received. "I have never touched a drop since," was her testimony.

You, too, my searching friend, can walk away with victory by applying these rules to your problem! Why not ask, believe, and claim now!

Will you bow where you are and pray this simple prayer of faith?

Dear Lord, I need victory. (Here state what you need victory over.) You have promised victory as a free gift in 1 Corinthians 15:57. I ask believingly, and I thank You I have received triumphantly—not because I feel it, but because You have promised to deliver those who all their life time have been subject to bondage. (See Hebrews 2:14, 15.) In Jesus' name. Amen.

7

Thrilling Financial Solutions

AGAIN, I have seven important Bible facts I would like to share with you:

1. Jesus is the foundation of all truth. Romans 9:1, "I say the truth in Christ."
2. Personally knowing God and Jesus Christ constitutes eternal life. John 17:3, "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent."
3. Since this is true, God does not ask us to return to Him a tenth of our income because He needs it. Psalm 24:1 says, "The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein." Put with that Psalm 50:10, "For every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills."

 Realizing what these verses say, the question comes: Why does God ask us to return to Him a tenth of our income? We know that God is not dependent upon us for His

sustenance. He does not need our money, except as He chooses to need it. But why would He choose this method? Of what value is this doctrine? God has given every Bible doctrine to acquaint us with His Son; for His Son is the basis of all truth. So as we become acquainted with His Son, we have life eternal. This can be the only logical reason.

4. The tithing system was given to us so that God might do something wonderful for us. Notice the promise in Malachi 3:10: "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it."

This is an unqualified promise God makes to anyone! God is anxious and willing to fulfill this promise to each of us. It is part of the plan of heaven to acquaint us with the Foundation of Truth, Jesus Christ. God owns the world. He promises if we will return to Him a tenth of our income, He will open for us the windows of heaven and pour us out a blessing, and in doing this we will become acquainted with His Son, in Whom is life eternal!

It may be, in the process of experimentation, the Lord will allow us to come to want, or near want. It is then that we take the promise of Malachi 3:10 and ask God to open the windows of heaven. We tell Him we believe He will open the windows. And we tell Him that we claim these open windows by returning thanks that we have re-

ceived the blessing. This, of course, is the ABC of prayer. Few of us have realized all that God is willing to do for us, but the challenge is waiting! God is aware of some of the strait places tithing might bring us into. But He knows also the blessing that He can give us only as we accept the challenge of obedience. When we accept the challenge, claiming the promise for this special time of difficulty, the windows open and we come to know God, not only as a Saviour, but also as a Provider. This way we come to know God by personal experience. And knowing Him that way, we have a knowledge no one can take from us—knowledge that will prove priceless in our journey toward the kingdom of heaven.

5. This experience elicits a sharing of the wonderful gifts of God with others. Malachi 3:16, 17, "Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another: and the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name. And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him."

Here is the picture: We have been in trouble. We have called on the Lord. The devourer tried to devour us. We presented to the Lord the promise He has made, and He answered in a marvelous way. Then we talked to each other about it. We shared the experience of the good things of the Lord.

The tithing system is one of the ways, one of the processes, by which the Lord makes

up His jewels. It is by this method that He perfects an unselfish people who will be ready to go home with Him to glory-land.

6. Any trouble we might experience will allow God to come to our rescue, and this will give us reason to glorify God. Notice Psalm 50:15: "And call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me."

 There are three key words in this verse: "call," "deliver," and "glorify." This is the Christian's experience. We call on God when we are in trouble. He delivers us. Then we tell the world we know He exists and loves us, and we glorify Him.

7. We shall witness to His glory throughout eternity. Revelation 5:13, "And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever."

 Throughout eternity as we travel from planet to planet, from one unfallen world to another, we shall be declaring the love and care and interest that the Creator of the universe has had for us in providing for our every need. We will show our gratitude in our never-ending praise to God, and help the unfallen creation to know a dimension of the love of God that they have never experienced. This is the Christian's privilege.

I was born into a tithing family. My father was a very conscientious tither. He believed in not only the first tithe, which, according to the Bible, is

sacred and used only for the support of the ministry, but he returned a second tithe. The second tithe is used for the maintenance of the church and its organization. It pays for the building of churches, the purchase of Sabbath School supplies, home and foreign missions, helps the poor and needy, et cetera. It includes the religious needs of our own homes, such as church day school education, all religious books for our children, et cetera. No organization can operate without funds. My father believed this and set aside a second tithe for this. That is why the Bible says, "Bring ye all the tithes." You see, it is plural!

Many times I have seen my father take out the Bible and place his finger on the 10th and 11th verses of Malachi 3 and tell God that he believed what was written there, and then claim the promise. There were times when he reminded God that the verse says, "And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes." Some of those years on the farm were difficult. But God always answered and was true to His word.

There were eight boys in our family. Father had a real handful of problems. I have understood in later years why Father lost his temper sometimes, because what we boys did not do, scarcely was done! But Father instilled in us boys, from our earliest years, the importance of tithing. Whenever we received ten pennies, one of them went into the tithe envelope and we marked it opposite the word *Tithe.* We, as a family, came to expect God to work miracles for us, because we had fufilled the conditions of the promise. We returned to God a faithful tithe, and God did not disappoint us. We knew that He was watching over us, for He demonstrated it time and again.

One Sabbath morning we were ready to go to

church. My father was the local elder of the church and it was his responsibility to lead the services. One of the brethren called Father and informed him he would be unable to attend church that morning because he had a sick cow. After he hung up the receiver on the phone, I remember that Father turned to us and earnestly said, "I wouldn't be surprised if his cow dies. That man is robbing God of tithes and offerings." I never forgot that! It made a very deep impression on my young mind.

When church was over we called the man to see how his cow was. I was interested to know whether my father's prediction would come true. When we reached him on the phone and inquired about the cow, the man sadly said, "I'm sorry to tell you it died!" Father was right. He turned to us and solemnly declared, "Just as I expected." Let me tell you, I have never forgotten that incident.

A few weeks later, Father had a sick cow. I wondered what was going to happen now. It was sick with the same sickness the neighbor's cow had died of. This was going to be interesting! I can remember it as if it were yesterday. Taking the big family Bible and opening it to Malachi 3:8-12, Father read aloud. He read God's invitation to us to prove Him. He read God's promise to open the windows of heaven and pour out a blessing. And God will rebuke the devourer. He paused, as I recall, as he read verses 11 and 12. He read again, "And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; . . . And all nations shall call you blessed: for ye shall be a delightsome land, saith the Lord of hosts."

Father closed the Book and we knelt to pray. Father simply and humbly claimed this promise. He reminded God that we could not afford to lose the cow. We all arose from our knees. Father had read

the promise. He had believed the promise, and claimed it.

Father also believed that faith without works is dead. So he took a long-necked bottle and filled it with some kind of concoction. I don't know of what it consisted, but he gave that cow the works! He poured the concoction down the throat of that cow, and it really stirred up her stomach and whatever else needed stirring! That cow got up in a hurry! She got well! I have never forgotten that experience. It left an indelible impression on me to think that God cares about cows! And about a family with low income! Oh, I'll tell you, we knew God lives and cares.

The world at large today—and it seems sometimes even those who call themselves Christians—believe that God is dormant, if not dead. They have the impression that even if He does live, He can not do much for us; that He is unable to intervene. My friend, if God is up in heaven and does nothing about our plight, He might as well be dead. But He *does* do something about our plight, thanks be to God!

When I was a little older, another experience greatly impressed me. My brother Clinton, who was in his teens, was planning to become a minister. But he had a problem. His voice would not change. Now it is normal for boys nine and ten years of age to speak in a high treble voice. But when a boy gets to be thirteen and fourteen, the man-voice takes over and the voice changes. But Clinton's voice, it seemed, would not change, and it worried him as well as our parents. One night Clinton decided he had worried and stewed long enough about his voice. Before he went to bed that night, he got down on his knees and took this problem to God. He said, "Lord, You know I can't preach with a voice like this. If You want me

:o be a preacher, as I think You do, please heal my ;oice."

The next morning he came downstairs into the :itchen where Mother was busy making breakfast. She had her back to him as he entered the room. He greeted her with, "Good morning, Mother."

"Good morning, Miles," she said, and then turned ınd saw it was Clinton. "Oh," she said, "I thought t was Miles. Your voice, why, it has changed!"

Clinton went out to the barn. Father seeing some-)ne come in said, "Good morning."

Clinton replied, "Good morning, Father."

Father said, "How are you this morning, Miles?"

"It's me, Father, Clinton."

"Clinton!" Father exclaimed. "By the voice I hought it was Miles. Why, your voice has changed!"

"Yes, Father, the Lord heard my prayer and ıealed my voice last night."

Prayers of gratefulness arose that morning, let ne assure you. Clinton's voice has been perfect ever ince. Clinton went on to be a mighty power in God's hands.

I say, we came to expect these miracles, simply)ecause we believed God, and believed that what He)romised He would fufill. This is God! There's noth-ng uncertain about Him or His promises. He makes promise and then expects us to believe it so that He *can* fulfill it.

When I was six years of age, my mother was lying of what our doctor diagnosed as valvular eakage of the heart. Medical science had not come hrough with some of the miracles of surgery and)lastic parts that are now available. Every diagno-is showed that Mother was not going to be able to ive. We clustered around her bed and were very im-)ressed with the seriousness of her condition. We :nelt together and prayed to the One Who had come

to our rescue so many times before. We each prayed. I was the youngest. When it came my turn I said, "Lord, I have four dollars in my bank. If You will heal my mommy, I'll give You all the money I have."

God healed my mother right then and there. Immediately! You say, "How do you know He healed her?" I'll tell you how I know. She lived to be almost 102 years of age! Mother and Father told me later that I did not need to make that promise to the Lord. He did not really need all of my money. But Father added that since I had promised God, I should give it! And I did, gladly. I have still been able to make out financially!

You can see why I came to understand that God's blessings and tithing go hand in hand? There was no question in our minds as a family. Nor has there been any question in my mind as an individual. Years later, while preparing for the ministry, I was receiving a salary of $10.00 a week. I had been tithing. I had not yet adopted the plan of double tithing. But in my study, I read from my favorite author that the Hebrew people returned to God fully a fourth of their income. This, normally, would have reduced them to poverty. On the contrary, it made it possible for the God of heaven to bestow upon them a very special blessing—an extra special blessing. I reasoned that if God would do that for them, He might just do it for me, too. I decided to test God and see what He would do for me. So, I put aside one-fourth of my $10.00. That still left me with $7.50 for the week.

I was taking a correspondence course at the time which cost a few dollars; but that still left me some money with which to eat. I did very well on that schedule and the Lord blessed me. I was still single, of course. About that time the Coon family had a

reunion! Five of the eight brothers were preachers, and with all the wives and children, there were forty-three of us Coons present! I was the youngest brother. In the course of our get-together, we preacher brothers talked about the things that we had in common. We had a good time visiting together. I told them, among other things, that I had come across something wonderful. I mentioned my plan to lay aside a quarter of my income for the Lord, as the Hebrews of old had done. They evidently had not heard of it because they looked rather shocked when I told them about it. They were not too impressed with my decision. But I told them that the Lord has invited us to prove Him, and that was what I was going to do for a period of a few months.

One of them reminded me, that as a young preacher I was not getting too large a salary to begin with, and ought to be careful how I used it. "Yes," I replied, "I am. But if the Lord will bless a man for giving one tenth, He ought to bless twice as much for giving a quarter of his income." When one brother jokingly suggested that tithe money is given *for* the minister, rather than to be given *by* him, I explained that I felt a minister should be an example of faith, obedience, and tithing.

I told him that I would conduct this experiment, and at the end of the experiment I would write and tell him about it. He appeared afraid that I would be in need and be writing him for assistance and replied, "Don't write me at all. If you're really blessed, you'll be married by the time your experiment is over."

Now, I had not at all planned to be married within that testing period, but before it had expired, I was married! I did not merely make out well during those months; I made out exceptionally

well! Just think of all the gifts we received at the time of our wedding! Usually when a man gets married, he expects to give the minister at least $10.00. We had my wife's father, an ordained minister, perform the ceremony. He gave us $40.00. We saved $50.00 right there! Talk about financial problems being solved! The Lord helped us in a marvelous way!

Before we were married we received a call to go as missionaries to the West Indies. So some weeks after our wedding, we left for our field of labor. We did not have any money to buy a car, and down there near the equator, the sun really shines. It is hot! I had to go on foot to make my visits in that intensely hot sun. One day, the Union Conference treasurer, Pastor M. D. Howard, came to speak in our evangelistic tabernacle. His sermon was on faith. And he illustrated it by reviewing the life of George Mueller. He told of the wonderful answers to prayer that this man of faith received. George Mueller made a practice of opening his Bible to a promise and placing his hand on it while claiming the promise. His reason for so doing was based on the simple fact that he believed what God said He would do, He would perform. It was a powerful sermon and made a deep impression on my wife and me.

When we returned home, we talked about the sermon and the experiences that George Mueller had had. We agreed that if God could do that for George Mueller, was it too much for the Lord to give us a car? We could think of many reasons why we needed a car. We knelt by the side of our bed that night and prayed, claiming the promise of Malachi 3:8-12. Within two weeks we received a letter from the States containing an unsolicited $100. We decided this was the Lord's way of answering our

prayer, and used the money to make a down-payment on a car. Now we should have asked God for wisdom to know what kind of car to purchase. But evidently we failed to do this, and as a result we bought a car with snap-on-curtains, instead of windows. Had we used better judgment, we would have bought one with roll-up-and-down windows.

There in the tropics when it starts raining, many times it pours! Often, also, before we could get those curtains on, the rain had stopped and we were soaked! But even with this less expensive car, some of our brethren asked, "How can you afford a luxury like this?" We explained that we were claiming God's promise, and He was answering us. You know, even missionaries sometimes have a problem knowing that God really will answer prayer. Unfortunately, it seems, some of them had never experienced many real answers to prayer. They thought we were acting very unwisely.

At the end of each month we had to make our car payments. In order to do this, we restricted our variety of food. American canned foods were too expensive! We used, for the most part, native grown produce. The Lord impressed people to bring to us such things as oranges, bananas, and many other kinds of fruits and vegetables. Consequently, our food budget was truly minimal! The money we saved went into the car!

Months later we were blessed with the coming of a baby girl. But then we faced an increase in our expenses for which we had not been able to make sufficient provision. I remember one day coming home and saying to my wife, "Unless the Lord works a miracle, we are going to lose our car. It seems as though we can't afford both the baby and the car. But, then, we have had it for several months and it has been a great blessing. Like Job

we must say, 'The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away.'" We decided that we would not be stubborn. If this was what the Lord saw was best to do, we would be happy with His decision. But somehow we just did not think the Lord would want to deprive us of something that was such an aid to us in our soul-winning work for Him. If He wanted us to keep the car, however, He would have to perform a real miracle. It would take more than the kindness of the church members bringing fruits and vegetables. It would have to be a real miracle!

The next day I drove the car to the gas station for some gas. I felt somewhat like the widow mentioned in the Bible who started to use her last drop of oil to make some cakes for herself and her son, and then await death. I was going to get a little gas with the last few pennies of money I had. This particular gas station owner was also a car dealer. He said to me, "Why, Pastor, you ought not to have a car like this."

I thought to myself, If he only knew, I'm pretty close to not having it!

"Here's the kind of car you ought to have," he said pointing to a lovely car with roll-up-and-down windows!

Well, that really got me excited! It was just what we needed! But I knew it was impossible. For once I remained silent and let him do the talking. He went on to tell how much he would allow me in trade for my car. It was a fabulous offer. Then I prayed silently, "Lord, You have always taken care of us. You have promised to open the windows of heaven." And then I remembered that it was the coming of our daughter that had caused us to get behind in our budget. It would not take long to clear that up and then we would be alright again. So I re-

plied, "If I trade, would you give me three months before making the first payment?"

"Sure," he said. "I'll do that for you."

"Sold," I said, without a moment's hesitation. He took the car with the snap-on curtains and let me have the car with the roll-up-and-down windows. I drove that car home and bounded into the house exclaiming, "Honey, come out and see our car!" She wondered what I meant, for she had seen our car many times. But she did come out. Well, when she saw the new car and heard how it became ours, she just about went into orbit. I invited her to go for a ride. We drove over to visit a photographer who had just recently united with the church. He had experienced a blessed conversion through our labors and was happy in the Lord. So we wanted him to rejoice with us in the purchase of our new car. This particular car was a Whippit. You may recall that this car was built real high. When the photographer came out, he looked at it and exclaimed, "I see that Isaiah 58 has been fulfilled!" I looked a bit astonished, then he added, "You know, where it says, 'I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth.' " (See Isaiah 58:13, 14.)

Indeed we did "ride upon the high places of the earth," and the Lord was good to us. Over and over, the Lord has led us through one crisis after another, and each time we have been brought closer to the Lord Jesus Christ. There is no question in my mind that God knows how to solve financial problems. I want to be quick to say that this does not mean we are to buy the most expensive furniture and obligate ourselves financially with debts incurred because of an over-active want gland. But the Lord will bless us if we will make our wants correspond with our needs, and then buy wisely. It may be that we will not be able to keep up with the

Joneses. It may be that we will have to be content with something less than our neighbors have, as far as this world's goods are concerned. But God says He will supply our needs. God promises that those who see and watch us will call us blessed, in that they will be impressed that the Lord is with us and supplying our needs. This being so, we will not look shabby or tacky. On the other hand, we shall not demand luxury.

Another thrilling experience that comes to my mind took place during the second world war. It was almost impossible to rent a home. We had just come to Madison College and the rent problem existed there to the extent that the conference brethren suggested we buy a home. This would be a difficult solution to our problem for two reasons. One, we had no money; and two, it was just as difficult to buy as it was to rent. There was a scarcity of homes. One morning my wife and I opened our Bible to Malachi 3. We said, "Lord, You can help us find a place to rent or buy, whether there appear to be places or not." We called the real estate agent again with whom we had driven many, many miles looking in vain for a place. It had been a frustrating experience thus far, because look where we might, there just were not any places either to rent or to buy.

This particular morning we got into his car, went down Oakdale Drive and came upon a modest little home with a "For Rent" sign in front. We could hardly believe it. How had this house evaded our searching eyes all these days? But there it was. We went to the door and knocked. A sweet lady came in response to our knock and we told her why we had come. She was gracious and in a few minutes we had rented a comfortable home at a modest figure. We lived there for two years.

We decided, if possible, we should live on the col-

lege campus. It would be two miles nearer our work, and enhance our efficiency. Again we went to the Lord and asked Him to help us. Places were still very scarce, but the Lord opened the way. A man was just getting ready to move away from the area and his house was for sale. I looked it over and was pleased with what I saw. The price was right, too. There was just one problem. I had no money. "Look," I said, "I'll pay you a very good monthly rent and maybe you can allow some of this to go on a down-payment." The man agreed and we moved into this house. We stayed there until we were through pastoring that church.

The Lord blessed in our work at Madison to the extent that we were able to start a new church. I was to leave Madison College and pastor the new church in the town of Madison. This meant we would have to move again. This time we went to the Lord and said: "Lord, You have heard us tell the people how You come to our rescue. You have heard us tell the people how we claim the promises. If it is Your will, please give us a real nice home. We are willing to live in a shack, but people might say, 'Is this the man that tells about the promises? Look where he lives!' I would not mind, Lord, if it could be a nice brick home on a double lot on a corner, if that is alright with You."

I knelt, offering that prayer with my tithe envelope containing one quarter of our income for that month in one hand. My other hand was on the promise of Malachi 3:8-12. Then I lifted my hands to God and said, "Lord, You have said that You would that men lift up holy hands as they ask. [See 1 Timothy 2:8.] So there is God, here is Jesus, and here am I. Through the name of Jesus I come. I believe that You are going to give us just the place You see we should have."

I jumped in my car and drove up to Florence Avenue. And there on the corner was a brick house on two lots with a nice "For Sale" sign in front. I called the broker inquiring, "How much is the place?" He told me the price and said the down payment would be $1,800. But I did not have any ready cash!

"Well, now," I said, "would you let us buy it on a rent-payment basis?" I could almost hear him puff over the telephone.

"Mr. Coon," he said, "that is a reasonable down payment the owner is asking."

"Yes, you are right," I agreed. "But you see, I just don't happen to have the down payment, and I think the people will agree to these terms."

"But his is a reasonable offer," he insisted.

"You are right. It *is* reasonable," I repeated. "But I think they will be willing for me to pay for it like rent."

"But ... but ... we just don't do business this way."

"That may be so," I said, "but I do." Then I said, "Would you do me the favor of presenting my request to the owners and asking them about it?"

"Well, I guess I could do that," he grudgingly agreed.

That afternoon he called back and announced that the owners had agreed to accept my proposition. "But where do I get my commission?" he asked. I told him I would pay him $25 a month until he had received all his commission. We lived in that nice home until we went into revival work for the Southern Union Conference. Then we asked the Lord to help us to sell it to someone who needed it and would appreciate it. It pleases the Lord for us to ask Him to help us to help someone else, too, instead of asking the blessings only for ourselves. A

very needy family came and bought the home. It was years before they paid us for our equity. But they paid. We were once again impressed with the leadership of the Lord. Again we knew that God intervenes in the affairs of men.

What is your financial problem? If you are willing to be led of the Lord, you, too, can have thrilling financial solutions to any problem that you have, regardless of how great or how small it might be. Won't you prove the Lord and let Him lead you to the heights of experimental Christianity? May the Lord bless you as you venture out by faith.

Will you pray with me? Dear Lord, Creator of worlds, I come determining to prove Your love and care by returning to You that which is Yours in tithes and offerings. I ask You to open the windows of heaven as You promised in Malachi 3:10 to 12, that I may better know You. I believe triumphantly, and thank You I have received. In Jesus' name. Amen.



8

Our Amazing Healings

I WOULD like you to notice seven important Bible facts with me as we endeavor to understand our subject of healing:

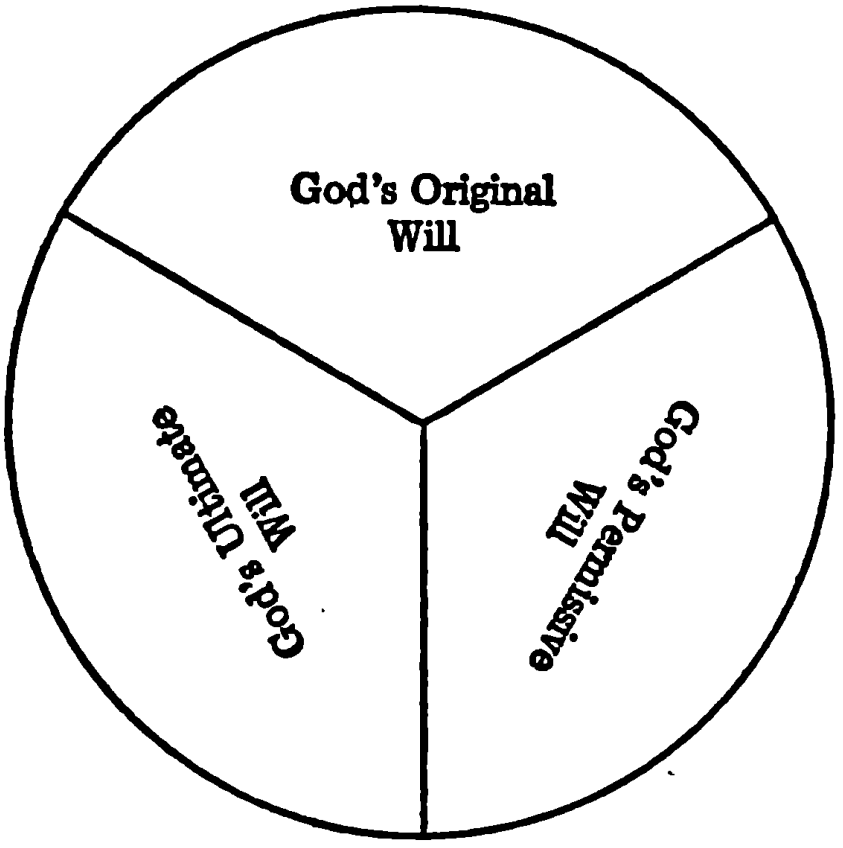
1. Jesus is coming again. John 14:1-3, "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again."
2. He is coming again to receive us. John 14:3, "... and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also."
3. He is going to take us to a place where the inhabitants shall not say, I am sick. Isaiah 33:24, "And the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick."
4. There is only 33-1/3% of a chance that God now wills for us to be sick.
5. Of that 33-1/3%, I would say that it is probably God's will that no more than 2/5 be ill, which makes it only about only one in ten that could be sick for any purpose, as far as God's purpose is concerned.

6. Therefore, we are to learn to obey the laws of health as a condition to healing. This is the law of sowing and reaping brought to view in Galatians 6:7.
7. Then we are to claim the ABC's of healing; or engage in the anointing service as described in James 5:14 and 15; or observe the laying on of hands as Jesus mentioned in Mark 16:18; or claim the healing power of God's Word as stated in Psalm 107:20. The last one is the one we have found to be one of the most powerful—the laying of our hand on a Bible promise for healing, and claiming it. One such promise is found in Hosea 6:1, "He will heal us." Another is Jeremiah 33:6, "I will cure them." These are wonderful healing promises.

In reviewing these seven points, I want to draw our attention to point number four. Let us draw a circle and divide it into three parts. We will allow this circle to represent the will of God with regard to sickness. One part of the circle represents God's original will, another part His ultimate will, and the third part His permissive will.

We know that God's original will was that no one should be sick. The early record of man indicates that man was free from sickness. The Bible makes this very clear. We know, too, that God's ultimate will is that there shall be no more sickness. (See Revelation 21:4, 5.)

These verses tell us that in that better land "there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain." This, then covers two-thirds of God's will for mankind in regard to sickness. The only part of the circle we



have not dealt with, is that third part which we have designated as "God's permissive will."

This area of God's will is not difficult to understand. It is simply the law of sowing and reaping. If a man jumps off a building, God permits that man to break a leg or an arm, or maybe even his neck. This is neither God's original will, nor His ultimate will. It is His *permissive* will. There are thousands of people who are sick, under the illusion that it must be God's will they be sick. God finds no pleasure in seeing a person sick. Very often these people who want to credit God with their sickness are quick to turn to Job's experience and say, "Look at Job! Wasn't he sick?" Did God want him to be sick? No. Satan wanted it. God merely permitted it.

But you and I are not in Job's class. Do you know

now I know that? We need but look at the first two chapters of the book of Job to see that the devil challenged God. God told Satan that Job was perfect and upright. There was no selfishness in Job at all. But the devil said, "If You touch his possessions, he will curse You." But that did not work. Then Satan said, "Touch his body and Job will display selfishness and curse You." Job's sickness was a demonstration of the power of God within a fully surrendered heart. It was to prove to the universe that Job would remain true to God even in trial. It was to show that selfishness was not in the heart of Job, and that even severe trial would prove there was none there. I know you and I are not in Job's class because we reveal our selfishness every day, without being tried! So it seems there is not one of us that is sick for the same reason Job was. In most cases we can cross that reason off our list. No, most of us cannot claim the perfection of Job. The fact of our selfishness is revealed far more readily than it would need to be. Our families might well attest to that.

There is another class who say, "It must be I am sick for the reason the apostle Paul was—"a thorn in the flesh" "lest I should be exalted above measure." (See 2 Corinthians 12:7.) Paul was caught up to the third heaven in vision. Are you and I in that class? I think most of us would have to say we are not in the apostle Paul's class, for we have not had visions such as Paul had.

We cannot say, "I am sick because I am in Job's class," because we are not. Nor can we say, "It must be God's will for me to be sick because I am in Paul's class," because we are not in his class either—probably not one of us in a thousand!

Then there is that person who says, "I believe that probably it is God's will for me to be sick so I

can bring glory to Him." What could that individual mean by a deduction like that? Is it reasonable to believe that if there was an Adventist church on one side of the street and a Methodist church on the other side of the street, and all of the members of the Adventist church were sick and all the members of the Methodist church were well, that the sick Adventists would bring more glory to God by their sickness? Is that a reasonable deduction? Why, it is ridiculous. We do not glorify God, nor does God intend to display His glory through sick bodies. No, a thousand times no! This kind of reasoning is nothing more than superficial thinking, I believe, or an attempt to cover up the real reason. Or perhaps there is an unwillingness to face reality.

Then there is the person who says, "Well, Jesus bore our sicknesses." Jesus died vicariously. I can not possibly be in His class. Matthew 8:17 says that Jesus did take on "our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses," but that was that He might pay the price of our salvation. Certainly we cannot enter into this class! Very few people die vicariously. Sometimes loved ones are led to Christ because of someone's death, but not too often. Very few sick people have I ever seen, who so nearly represented the Lord, that I thought by their sickness they could lead someone to the Lord. These are almost non-existent.

This one thing is clear thus far. I am not in Job's class. I am not in Paul's class. I am not in Christ's class. What class is left for me to fit into? Well, there are those who say, "I must be in the hereditary class." This class turn to Exodus 20:5, and point to the place where God says that He will visit "the inquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation." This is often referred to as hereditary, or inherited, weaknesses.

This is possible, but let us hasten to notice that Romans 5:20 says, "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." So not too many can point to this as a reason for their sickness. No, not too often can we blame Father or Mother for our sickness, because here is a promise I can claim and find deliverance from that class.

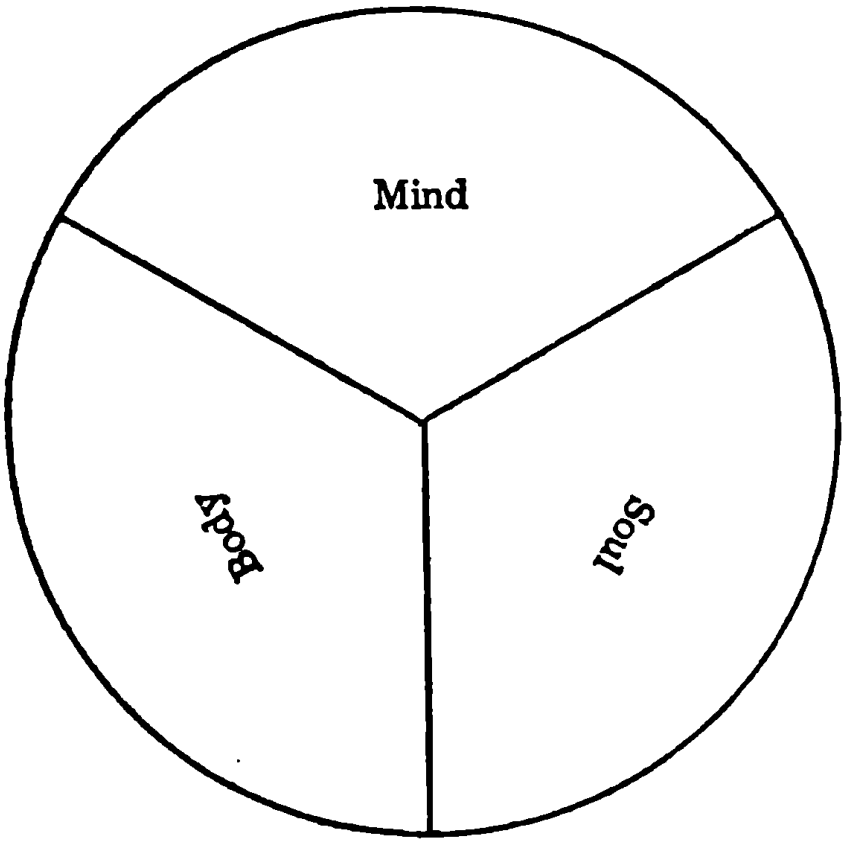
This brings us to another class of sick people. This class is sick because they are breaking God's laws. Galatians 6:7 says, "Be not deceived; . . . for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." Is not this the biggest reason why we are sick? I think if we will be honest with ourselves, we will agree that this constitutes the greatest reason for our sickness.

What are some of the laws that we are breaking? It is of vital importance that we understand this first of all. If we are sick and want to claim the promise for healing, we first of all must be willing to fulfill the conditions for healing. So this is a most important question that must be answered.

Man is a three-fold being. 1 Thessalonians 5:23 says, "And I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." Man is a spirit, body, and soul; or, mind, body and soul. Let us draw another circle and divide this into three parts. One part would be the mind, the next part the soul, and the third part the body.

What things can the mind do that will lead me into sickness? My favorite author indicates that ninety percent of sickness originates in the mind. One of the things the mind does that causes sickness is that it *wills* to be sick. There are countless millions who are sick, only because they *will* to be sick. Their mind tells them they are sick.

Why would they *will* to be sick? Why would a



person choose to be sick? There are many reasons for this. One person chooses sickness, because if he is sick he can have his own way. Many have learned this from childhood. I have gone into homes where the child would throw a fit and then Mother would do what the child wanted her to do. Many grown-ups find they can get their own way only if they throw a fit. They can not do this in the same way a child does it, but they disguise it by getting sick—choosing to get sick! Yes, this is often the case. And it starts during childhood when these children are allowed to throw a tantrum and then get their own way because Mother or Father does not want to put up with the fussing any longer. It is tragic that parents today are giving in to this kind of devilish per-

formance. Thank God there are yet a few who do not.

Yes, one reason why people *will* to be sick is so they can have their own way. I have a friend who can have a heart attack whenever he wants to. I have watched him do this over a period of many years. He even had hydrophobia several times, at will. He enjoyed it very much. There are many people who enjoy poor health. Many do this unconsciously. But they do, because they know then they can have their own way.

Another reason why the mind *wills* to be sick is because people *will* to fail. Many reason: If I am sick, I will not be expected to succeed. Thousands are afflicted with this type of sickness. Let me be quick to re-emphasize that these people do not do this on the conscious level. They do it unconsciously.

The great governing power of health is the will. The mind wills to be well, or to be sick. My favorite author says in the book *The Ministry of Healing*, page 246, that there are thousands who could regain health if they only *willed* to do so. God does not want them to be sick. I am glad to know that! We can totally discount the story that some people tell—that they believe it is God's will they be sick. Just remember the story of the Adventists and the Methodists worshipping across the street from each other! This will immediately show the ridiculousness of this type of thinking. God wants His children to be healthy and happy. It is a far greater glory to Him to have His children in the limelight of health, rather than on the sick list. But many people are too lazy to put forth the effort to succeed, and so they are sick. It is more convenient that way. People will surely not expect as much from a sick person.

Another class who *will* to be sick is the one who

is looking for pity. You see, there are many peopl who know they will get much more attention if the are sick than if they are well. They crave pity an attention. Have you not on occasion, asked someone "How are you?" And they reply, "Well, I'm not feeling too well today. My head aches and my stomac is upset." And on and on they go. What are the doing? They are looking for pity, rather than fo good health! Pity is more precious than health! Oh the answers you get when you ask some people hov they are! It gives them an invitation to begin to lis their aches and pains. And do you know, people ge into the habit of mentioning a complaint when they are asked how they are? They might not think of i otherwise, but when you ask them how they are this gives them a spark of inspiration and away they go, listing all their troubles. And they enjoy doing it! Instead of saying, "I'm fine. I feel great!" and begin to enjoy good health, they would rather say, "Oh, I feel so so." Or as some say, "I'm just tolerable." I must admit it's difficult for me to tolerate that, too much!

Again, may I repeat, these are symptoms of that class who have a sickness originating in the mind. I am not speaking of those who are sick in spite of their desire to be healthy. But before this class can be well, their minds must be changed. They must *will* to be *well.* The will of man must be brought into harmony with the will of God. God would have us prosper and be in good health. (See 3 John 2.) Therefore, I know it is God's will that I be well. I also know that I must, if I am going to be healthy, put my will in line with the will of God.

In a Florida city several years ago, we were conducting meetings just like this. A lady who was ill came to the services, anticipating the subject on healing. We did not know at the time that she was

healed during that particular service, but later she wrote us about it. She said, "I expected to be healed in that service." In other words, she put her mind and will on the side of getting well.

Now, what about the soul? How is this involved in this matter of health? What conditions must the soul live up to in order to claim Bible promises for healing? The soul must first of all get rid of hatred. Hatred is a deterrent to good health. In fact, it is impossible to have good health with hatred in the heart. Many Christians are unwilling to own up to the fact that they harbor hate in their hearts. This is serious, because the Bible says that one who hates is a murderer. (See 1 John 3:15.) Who is it that is being murdered? The one who is doing the hating especially. He is murdering himself! Health authorities declare that if a person could hate intensely for one hour, unable to throw off through the eliminatory processes the poisons that are produced by hate, enough poison could be generated to kill eighty people! When a person holds hard feelings, when a person hates, he is murdering himself!

At one of our meetings in a large Eastern city, a man came who was all crippled up with arthritis. He could hardly walk, and was in pain constantly. He said, "I'm this way because I have carried hard feelings. I have hated. I must stop doing that because it's killing me!" Hard feelings are a form of hatred, and most people will not admit it. Oh that we might learn the value of a sweet spirit, and the destructive force of hatred.

A lady was telling me on one occasion of all the people that were mean to her. "But," she said, "I don't hate them because I'm not supposed to." Since she was not supposed to, she would not own up to it, and as a result, carried both hatred and guilt in her heart. Guilt and hatred in the heart are killing

thousands of people every day. All forms of impurity in the heart—impure thinking, impure talking, impure actions—all of these are deadly! Jesus made this very clear when He said that he who looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart. This kind of activity is part and parcel of the work of the agency of darkness, and God says that light and darkness do not mix. There will be no place in the heavenly mansions for those who engage in this kind of activity.

The soul must be cleansed from hatred. All of this whipsering and talking about the injustices that have been done us, whether it be in our families, in the church, or in the community, must be brought to a certain halt. It will surely kill us. This is why, when claiming the promise for healing, one of the prerequisites, according to the apostle James, is to confess our faults one to another. We must let God get hatred and hard feelings out of our hearts before we can expect the Lord to do anything for us by way of physical healing.

On one occasion my wife and I responded to an invitation to visit a lady to pray for her healing. I was about to engage in the sacred act of prayer when I asked, "Sister, is everything alright between you and everyone else?"" She did not immediately reply.

"How is everything with you and the Lord?" I asked.

"Oh, fine," she replied. "Everything is fine between me and the Lord."

"How are things between you and the neighbors?" I asked.

"Well, my neighbors are not nice to me," she reflected.

That is a nice way of putting it, isn't it? She and

her neighbors were fussing, but it was the neighbors that were not being kind.

"I'll tell you how mean they are," she said, "Their cat comes over here and I feed it. It's such a scrawny cat. They never feed it, so I have to. And that makes them mad."

She was willing to be angry with the neighbors because of a cat. She was willing to endure the poison of ill-feelings for the sake of a cat. It could be to feed a cat was noble, but the Lord said that a man is much better than a beast. We ought to be kind to animals, but how tragic to be feeding a cat and feeding the fires of hatred at the same time. How much better it would have been if she had gone over to the neighbors and straightened things out. And later fed the cat, if this was possible. But here she was, asking the Lord to heal her so that she would have more strength to quarrel with the neighbors. The soul needs cleansing first, so God can do that which needs doing as far as the prayer of physical healing is concerned.

We were conducting a series of meetings in the deep South. A lady related an experience to me that she had had some years before. She had been afflicted with a rapidly growing abdominal tumor. By the time she went to see the doctor it had grown quite large and she was consistently losing strength. The doctor told her he would be unable to operate until she gained more strength. But she told us it was impossible for her to gain strength with the tumor still there. So she realized that the only way she was going to be able to gain strength was for her to be healed. She fully recognized the seriousness of her condition. She decided to call the conference president to come to her home and have special prayer for her healing. This was many years ago when transportation was not as convenient or as

rapid as it is today. The president came with his brief case in which he carried his Bible and the anointing oil.

In the quietness of that bedroom where she lay, unable now even to sit up, she heard the man of God inquire, "Sister, is everything alright between you and every living soul?"

"Yes, pastor," she replied, "all is fine with everyone." Then added slowly, "Except one person. We had a flood here some time back, and I allowed this lady to use my guesthouse during the time of the flood. I did not charge her any rent, but when she left she did not even pay the light bill. Ever since then I have not felt right toward her."

With that the pastor-president picked up his Bible and oil, put them in his case and started for the door. At the door he said, "Sister, when everything is alright with everyone, call me. I will be glad to come and pray for you." And he was gone!

I want to tell you, I believe that president had good judgment. He knew that God is not mocked. Men and women who refuse to acknowledge hatred in their heart, calling it righteous indignation, are hiding the facts of the case. What they have in their heart is hatred—pure and simple. It is selfishness covered under a cloak of righteousness. The conference president recognized this and would not anoint her with this feeling in her heart.

She told me, "I had three days of complete misery. There was a terrible battle raging in my heart. I was unwilling to acknowledge that I was to blame for this feeling. I told myself over and over that it was the other lady who had done me wrong. I was pitying myself and trying to justify my feeling toward her. After three days of agony I finally realized what had happened and I prayed to God, asking Him to take this barb out of my soul. I made

these wrongs right and cleared the slate. Then I was ready to have the president come back. It was some time before he could return. By this time I was even weaker than before. But again he came, with his Bible and the anointing oil. Again he asked, 'Sister, is everything alright between you and every living soul?' I knew what he meant. I knew that I was being asked if there were any misunderstandings and feelings that had not been settled. How happy I was to be able to tell him everything was alright.

"But even at this point the minister was cautious. He said, 'Sister, I am going for a walk down the street. I will be gone for about twenty minutes. I want you to study this over once more. Search your heart. I want you to be sure.' "

This took courage. I do not know if I would have the courage to tell a seriously ill person this, but this conference president did. And I say, Thank God! Anyone who will allow the poisons of hate to infect his soul is a murderer! This is a very serious matter, one that each of us as individuals must own up to.

"While he was gone," she said, "I searched my soul. I wanted to be sure there was no malice, or hatred, or any undesirable feeling in the recesses of my heart. When he came back, he again asked me, 'Sister, are you sure that everything is alright between you and every living soul—no misunderstandings?' This time I could say with real assurance, 'Pastor, not one!'

"With that, the president took out his Bible and began to read. He read the promises of God's Holy Word. Then he took the little bottle of sweet oil, and kneeling by my bedside he prayed. What a prayer he prayed! Then he anointed me with the oil by placing his hand on my forehead, claiming the promise

in the name of Jesus. While he was praying, there was no pain, but I felt the surgeon's knife cutting out this large abdominal tumor. I actually felt my body contract to its normal size."

How her face beamed as she stood there before us, the picture of health. "I couldn't pray," she said, "because I was filled with emotion and thanking God in my heart that He had come and healed me right on the spot! The pastor went home, and I got up! I was healed! There was no question about that. I went about my work. When my husband came home, he came in the door expecting to go to the bedroom to see me. But he looked and saw me standing there in the kitchen working! He said, 'Ethel, whatever has happened to you?' There I was, healthy and strong, and down to my schoolgirl size. I said to him, with a smile, 'Honey, Jesus has been here.' What a time of rejoicing we had! And I have felt wonderful ever since."

Friend of mine, in order for us to be eligible for the answer to the promises for physical healing, we must first have our souls cleansed by the power of the Lord Jesus Christ. We must first of all be willing to make wrongs right, and pray for the forgiving power of heaven to come in and purify these hearts of ours. We must be free of fault-finding, malice, criticism, and jealousy. This freedom comes only in response to a willingness to have this miracle of grace performed in us. It can be accomplished only by the power of the Holy Spirit. But there must first be a genuine desire to be rid of these body and soul destroying feelings. When in earnestness we pray for deliverance from all these hinderances to a fellowship with Jesus, then the shackles that would bind us are loosed, and we find the sweet peace, joy, and release in a spirit of love

and unity. This should precede the work of God in answer to the prayer for healing.

The third part deals with the body. This is the physical aspect of God's program for healing. This incorporates the eight basic natural remedies God has provided for us. They are:

1. Pure air
2. Sunlight
3. Abstemiousness
4. Rest
5. Exercise
6. Proper diet
7. The use of water
8. Trust in divine power.

These agencies have been given us for the maintenance of good health. When we violate or misuse them, we suffer. It is just that simple. Our bodies react to the violation of God's best program for us. But we can come to Him and ask forgiveness, and He will give it to us. More than that, He will put us back on the road to good health. Then with the gift of health ours once again, we can put our hand in His by faith, saying, "Lord, I choose to live in harmony with Thy laws. Help me to do it." We may fail again, but if we are in earnest and honestly desire to subscribe to His will, He will help us, and we will benefit by it a thousand times over.

What a wonderful Lord we have! Through the apostle Peter He has told us that there is healing in forgiving. Not only is He willing to forgive us time and again without number, but He says that if a brother sin against us, we ought to be willing to forgive him, not once or twice a day, but if need be, seventy times seven! There is healing in forgiving. I challenge you to try it.

Having set our will on the side of the Lord to be well, and having let Him cleanse us from all ill feelings, and having determined to live up to the laws of health to the best of our ability by His grace, then we can use the ABC's of prayer for healing. One of my favorite promises is Hosea 6:1 which says, "Come, and let us return unto the Lord: for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up." With this promise before us we then can "Ask" (Matthew 7:7) according to what God has promised. We can "Believe" (Mark 11:24). Then we can claim the promise and return thanks that we *have received* what God has promised (John 11:41).

I have witnessed some real miracles performed by the simple application of these principles. They have been given to us for our healing. They are yours and they are mine. It is our privilege to use these tools for our health and happiness. When we meet the conditions, the power of God is available without measure. It is God's will that His children be well. God lives today in mighty power to heal, just as when He walked the dusty highways of old Galilee. When we accept His willingness to help us do our part, He does His! Health for us was God's original will. It is His ultimate will as well. And I believe, in far more cases than we are aware of, it is also His permissive will.

Pastor Eugene Farnsworth was very ill at one time. He went into the hospital for an exploratory operation. The doctors found him filled with cancer. They declared it inoperable, so just sewed him up. They told him of his condition, and suggested that he would not be able to live long.

"How long do I have?" he asked. He was told that in cases like his, people usually lived about two weeks.

"Then I must appeal my case to another board of physicians," he said. "This board has Jesus at its head."

The doctors agreed. "We will go along with you." A special service of prayer and anointing was conducted. Pastor Farnsworth prayed, "Lord, I am only asking that Your will be done. If for some reason it should not be Your will to heal me, I surrender to Your will and I shall not be bitter. But now, Lord, having done that, I believe You want to do something for me, for You have promised." He reached out and took hold of God's promises and was completely healed! In giving his testimony before hundreds, he told how for a time he had recurrences of the cancer symptoms. Then his wife would say, "Euguene, assert your freedom!" He said that he asserted his freedom, and he was a well man. He lived for many years after that experience. When he died, it was from natural causes. Cancer never again afflicted his body.

I have felt for years that too many are making the wrong response to the statement, "if it be Thy will," when praying for their healing. I have known so many dear saints of God who let their faith weaken, because they are so conscientious and fear they may be presumptuous in asking for healing. I do not mean to convey the impression that we are not to pray "if it be Thy will." However, in my own personal experiences of healing from several diseases, including what the doctor diagnosed as incurable cancer some years ago, I took the attitude that God wanted to heal me. While I committed myself in life or death to the Lord, yet, I took a positive response to His promises of healing. I thought of "if it be Thy will" as a small stone, too small to let my faith stumble over, rather than a big wall, too high for faith to surmount. For I said to myself: If I

take the attitude that probably it is God's permissive will for me to die, how can my faith reach out actively and grasp the promise? So, once having completely submitted my future in life or in death, to the Lord, I took hold of His promises of healing (Jeremiah 33:6; Hosea 6:1; Psalm 118:17; Psalm 103:1-5; Isaiah 26:3), and asked God to fulfill these promises to me. I asked believingly. I believed triumphantly, and then thanked God that I had received to the fullest extent of His loving and infinite wisdom.

I took the attitude that I would not be bitter in case God's permissive will for me included death, yet I would not permit this thought to eclipse my activated faith in His healing promises. I experienced tremendous healing with this attitude toward my Father and my Redeemer. Twice has my case been diagnosed as cancer. First, some twenty years ago, and second, some fourteen years ago. And the second, as stated earlier, without hope. Today, in 1972, as I write these lines, I am threescore-and-nine years of age, and enjoy a physical, spiritual, and mental health as never before in my entire life.

There *is* a time to die. The holy Scriptures declare it in Ecclesiastes 3:1 and 2. And when we are to pass under the power of death, we have the promise, "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me" (Psalm 23:4). And again, "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints" (Psalm 116:15).

Jesus died at the age of thirty-three. His death was vicarious. Others have passed away at times we considered untimely. Some have been completely healed of one affliction, only to be permitted by our Lord to pass away under another. I recall the experience of a dear friend and fellow minister, Richard Barron. Years ago he rejoiced to hear our

studies on the ABC's of prayer. He immediately incorporated these rules into his own spiritual life and ministry. A few years later, as he was stricken down with a physical malady the doctors later declared was incurable, I felt inspired to write him a personal letter. In this letter I pointed out that it was my conviction he would be considered a hopeless case, physically speaking. He would be healed by the power of God, and then go forth and declare it to the world.

This letter was written before his case was considered hopeless. But everything I wrote him under the guidance of the Lord came to pass. He not merely rose from his sick bed, but for years carried on a beautiful soul-winning ministry for the Lord.

Then suddenly, and without warning, he was killed in a private plane crash. His noble, God-fearing wife who had stood by his side in his long-continuing sickness years before, now stood beside his casket at the funeral, and said with childlike trust and sincerity, "My God never makes a mistake."

So, my beloved friends, let us trust the Lord. Let us expect great things from His hands. But then let us not become bitter if His ways, which are past finding out in this life, do not fully coincide with our own ideas.

Will you pray with me? Dear Father in heaven, You have promised to send Your Word and heal (Psalm 107:20). We ask that every soul who feels the need of healing may now look to You in simple faith, believing and receiving, to the fullest extent of Thy love and wisdom, healing and health. In Jesus' name. Amen.

9

The Doctrine of Non-retaliation

WE HAVE come now to the subject, "The Doctrine of Non-Retaliation." As we begin to explore this fascinating subject together, I want to ask you, Have you ever had a nightmare? Some have spiritual nightmares. Others have mental nightmares. Still others take a trip into dreamland! Regardless of what your departure might have been, I hope you will find this chapter a blessing.

Notice with me, once again, seven great Bible facts:

1. Jesus is coming again! Hebrews 9:28, "And unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation."
2. He is coming for those who are like Him. 1 John 3:2 and 3, "Now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure."
3. Those who are like Jesus will have learned not to retaliate. 1 Peter 2:23, "Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he

suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously." (See verses 21-23.)

4. This class of people will not murmur or dispute. Philippians 2:14-16, "Do all things without murmurings and disputings: that ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world; holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain."

 Did you ever stop to realize that murmuring and complaining could keep you out of heaven? That is exactly what the verse says! We can be ever so faithful in tithing, Sabbath-keeping, all missionary work, or any other kind of church involvement; but if we have complained and disputed throughout our sojourn here, the Lord will tell us we have labored in vain. Do you begin to see how important it is that we understand this?

5. Why will they not do these things? John 19:10, 11, "Then saith Pilate unto him, Speakest thou not unto me? knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee? Jesus answered, Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above."

 Why is it, when Jesus comes again, there will be a people waiting to meet Him who will be a nonretaliating group? When they are reviled, they will not revile again. They are not a complaining, murmuring people. It is because they know that all the events

which take place, all the circumstances th surround them are by God's divine permi sion. No harm can come to them except : God allows it. The loving hand of the A mighty is watching over them, and the trust His wisdom.

6. They know that God allows trials and tribu lations to come but for one purpose—to re fine their characters. Isaiah 48:10, "Behold I have refined thee, but not with silver; have chosen thee in the furnace c affliction."

 John the Revelator saw in vision that those who are with Jesus are, "... called and chosen, and faithful" (Revelatio 17:14). This hot furnace of affliction is on of God's chosen ways to purify a people. Bu in the process of purification, these peopl recognize that their wise and loving Fathe will allow to come to them, by trial and trib ulation, only that which is necessary for their purification. They have learned by ex perience to trust God.

7. Therefore, the only fight in which they wil engage, is the fight of faith. 1 Timothy 6:12 "Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold or eternal life." Exodus 14:13, "Fear ye not stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord."

I wish I had learned these things when I was a boy, or in academy or college. I wish I had learned these things in my early ministry. I hope I have learned by now! But "let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" (1 Corinthians 10:12).

The following experience is only one of many I had in forging my way from nightmare to dream-

land. I am sure that those of us who will enjoy the final dreamland that Jesus has gone to prepare for us, will have gone through many nightmares. My favorite author mentions that no individual will ever reach gloryland without first going through some almost crushing experiences. I have had a taste of some of these experiences, and I want to relate one of them to you.

The experience revolved around the starting of a new church. The Lord had been very good to us in our ministry there. This necessitated the organization of a new church. I had some reluctance in promoting this venture, for through experience I had found that every time a new church is formed, ugly feelings seem to show themselves. Otherwise wonderful people, show an attitude that is totally foreign. I had seen this happen in churches that I had had a part in organizing, and so I felt somewhat hesitant in starting this new church. But, the membership was enthusiastic and requested that a meeting be called at which this possibility could be fully explored. I went to the meeting, hoping against hope that somehow the proposed plan could be averted. We had a wonderful meeting. A motion was made to start a new church in the nearby town. The vote was unanimous. It was evident the mind of the church was to organize a new group. They even suggested the number of charter members there should be in the new organization—over 100. I wrote my brother and told him the size of this new congregation. His response was, "That church was born with its pants on!"

Walking away from that meeting, I said to myself: Satan must be dead. I have never started any new church in my life where I have felt such a spirit of love and brotherhood. The feeling of unity was marvelous. Everything went along beautifully

for a period of months. During that time the fin plans were completed for the formation of this ne church. We had over 100 members! These were fin people, dedicated to the work of the Lord.

I made my mistake in suggesting the devil wa dead. Just about the time everything was workin out gloriously, five men, members of my church, fo a reason I have never been fully able to understand turned on me with an anger akin to that of a demon. These were the very men who originally ini tiated the idea of the organization of the new church. It was too late to retract our steps in the formation of this new group. Being a believer in the idea that once a work is begun, it should be finished I determined to carry it through to completion. I was at this point, it seemed, that all hell let loose in our midst.

These five men determined among themselves that the only thing to do to solve the problem was to get rid of the pastor. To this end they set themselves. They used every conceivable means to accomplish their task. I might say that there are some conferences where the membership have a great deal more to say about the calling and transferring of their ministers than do others. These men felt that their weight unitedly might influence the conference president in their direction. To complicate matters, it was election year. The president was up for reelection or transfer, according to the vote of the constituency. These five men sent a delegation of two of their number to the conference president during the time camp was being pitched for camp meeting. They said, "We have come to tell you that you are to get rid of Coon."

"Well," the president said, "election is just a few days away. I couldn't give you any assurance at this

time. Why don't you come to see me after the election."

"That's the point," the men emphasized. "We want to settle this *before* election."

"Oh, is that the way it is!" the president exclaimed. "You gentlemen can just be on your merry way, because I'm not going to be high-pressured into anything. I don't believe the Lord would have me operate that way." And with that he dismissed them.

Somehow, word got back to me that these men had made an appearance, and had had an appointment with the president requesting my dismissal. These things are hard to be kept absolutely quiet. I will have to confess that it has always been hard for me to practice the doctrine of nonretaliation. How I wanted to go in and defend myself and show that I was being treated most unfairly, but I knew that it would be very difficult for me to do this without hurting someone else. I was very frustrated and anxious. It was hard for me to stand still while all of this was going on.

This was just about the time my wife and I learned the secret and power of the ABC's of prayer. We had experienced marvelous answers to our prayers by simply asking, believing, and claiming Bible promises. We talked it over together, and I determined I was going to take a Bible promise and claim it in this situation. That was all I was going to do about it. I chose Isaiah 54:17, "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord."

In this promise I found my comfort and refuge. I read it and re-read it, and realized that as long as the Lord wanted us in this particular church, we

would be there, and no amount of pressure could change God's best plan. We determined not to run away from the situation. We agreed, too, that if God was through with us there, we were willing to leave. We were determined to have the right attitude and let God lead. We also found comfort in the statement Jesus made to Pilate, "Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above. . . ." (John 19:11). When God was through with us there, He would see that we were moved. But until then, we knew that no one could accomplish our removal. We decided, too, that we were not going to talk to people about this problem. We would not seek sympathizers. We were determined to leave it all in the hands of a wise God.

I knelt with my wife, and putting my finger on the promise of Isaiah 54:17 asked God to do for us what He had promised. We claimed the promise and told the Lord that we appreciated His action in our behalf. We confessed our unworthiness and asked for grace and strength to meet the situation. There on our knees we put into practice the ABC's of prayer, and returned thanks to God that He was already working out the problems.

My wife shared with me the promise she had taken and was claiming. It was Acts 18:10, "For I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee."

I thought this a wonderful promise! It was given to Paul when he thought his work was finished, but he stayed in the very same place fully one year and six months after he was given this promise. We thrilled together in the provisions our Lord had made for us in this situation. We had the promises. We were not afraid of what might come. The Lord had promised. We believed His promises, and just

waited and watched to see how He would fulfill them. We had gone through our trial, but had found the answer. Now we were ready to be spectators and see the Lord's arm bared.

Election time was coming in just a few days. Word got around that since the president of the conference would not subscribe to the plans of these men, they were now determined to see that he would not be reelected to the presidency. They felt they had the force needed to accomplish their scheme. Again, I called on the Lord and claimed the promises of His Word.

I realized that it was possible I might be called to serve on one of the many committees during the constituency meeting. I determined that if I was placed on a committee, I would not say one derogatory word about a living soul. I would not try to seek revenge or vent my feelings in any way. I asked God for grace not to retaliate in any form, for I wanted to be like Jesus, "Who, when He was reviled, reviled not again." I read and reread 1 Peter 2:21 to 23, and determined I would act like Jesus. I would support the cause and speak for positive programs, but not murmur or retaliate.

The time finally came. We assembled in the large auditorium. I was pastoring two churches at the time. The delegation from the one church sat in one pew; the delegation from the other church sat in another pew. I took charge of the one delegation and had one of the elders of the other church take charge of the second delegation. It was necessary for each church to choose one delegate to represent their church in the large committee. This large committee chooses all of the committees, which in turn decide the future of the conference. The five men in the church over which I was presiding had everything cut-and-dried as to who their delegate was

to be. I knew this, but I had made a decision that I was not going to revile those who were scheming my ouster. They made their choice, and I asked for a motion, and a second, and their candidate was chosen. While we were choosing our delegate, the other church of which I was pastor had elected me to represent them on the large committee.

Here we were. I would represent the one church, and the man whom the other church nominated was the very man who had boasted that his group would eliminate both the conference president and me, and that, before the day was through. We went into the assembly hall, and the first committee to be chosen was that committee which should choose the conference president. I sat there and listened and waited to see what would transpire. When the votes were tallied, there were more votes for me to be on that committee than for any other man. I wondered: How did this ever happen? But before the tallying was over, the other man was put on the committee, too!

The nominating committee now went to their quarters for the very important work of electing the president first of all. This other man was chosen as secretary of the committee. You can only imagine what was going through my mind and how the devil was tempting me to show a spirit that was like his. But I prayed, "Lord, You have promised, and I claim your promise. Help me not to say an unkind word about a living soul." I had a little battle of my own right there, but God came to my rescue, gave me strength and victory as I placed my will in His hands.

The chairman of the committee said, "Gentlemen, you have seen the work of our president over the last term of his office. His record is open to us all and we are well acquainted with what he has done.

What is the pleasure of the committee? Who do you want as your president for the next two years?"

Within two minutes, the president was nominated to resume his office. Within forty-five minutes the entire slate of officers was chosen. The man who acted as the secretary for the committee had been on the conference committee for the past two years, but in the newly-elected slate, his name was not even mentioned. He was completely out of the conference picture as far as influence was concerned. All of this was accomplished without a single derogatory word having been spoken by anyone. The work of the committee was taken back to the large delegation and within the hour was voted upon and accepted.

These men then came back to the chairman of the committee accusing him of having railroaded the slate through. Why did they accuse him of doing this? The answer is found in Romans 2:1, "Thou that judgest doest the same things." They had had their cut-and-dried scheme foiled. Now they were accusing the chairman of doing the very thing they had attempted to do. The chairman confessed that he had had no plans whatever with regard to officers, and his conscience was clear that he had acted in good faith in harmony with the attitude of the committee.

In a few days camp meeting was over. We had had a good sitting together and the Lord blessed with His presence. After the close of the camp meeting, word came to me that these men were now setting their eyes on the upcoming General Conference, at which time they were going to present my name to the General Conference president. I did not know I was that important! Imagine, a delegation going to our world leader trying to get rid of a little man like me! Again, my wife and I prayed together,

each of us claiming the same Bible promises we had claimed under the previous time of stress. Again we determined that we would not say one word to anyone, but let this scheme take its course. We were ready again to stand and let the will of the Lord be revealed. We would not revile, or murmur. God had shown us His power once, and we were ready to look for it again. We were determined to fight only the fight of faith.

I began a program in my churches of conducting the Wednesday evening prayer meeting services as a teaching service. I was teaching my people the glorious truth of the ABC's of answered prayer! We had a Bible on a table right below the pulpit, and I invited people to come up and put their fingers on a promise they wished to claim, in harmony with the suggestions in the books *Christ's Object Lessons*, page 147, and *Testimonies to the Church*, Volume 5, page 322. We had some wonderful prayer meetings. There were many who asked, believed, and claimed the promises of God. Souls were converted in those midweek services. The Holy Spirit was present and gave evidence of His presence by the change in the lives of the members.

In the meantime, these men were in attendance at the General Conference. The new president was elected and they sought him out. There in the main auditorium of that great session, they found him. "Now that you are our new General Conference president, we have a request to make of you," they said.

"What is it?" the president asked.

"We want you to get rid of Glenn Coon," they replied. Then they proceeded to tell the president all about me and present their case.

While they were talking to the president, another member of my church, who was not particularly

close to me, walked by and stopped to listen to what these men were saying. He had great trouble sleeping that night. In fact during the night he got up, found where the General Conference president was staying and called him on the telephone. He told the president that he just wanted to let him know that his church was blessed with a wonderful pastor. Then he proceeded to say some kind things about me that I did not deserve. I do not know the exact words he used, but I know I am not, nor have I ever been, good enough to deserve all of the nice things he said about me to the General Conference president that night.

When the General Conference was over, these men all returned home. Word soon got around that although they were foiled in their first attempt, this time they were going to be successful. "We'll get rid of him yet," they boasted. Again, when I felt the forces of evil pressing around me, I claimed Isaiah 54:17, and put my trust in the Lord, asking Him for guidance and understanding. I was determined to fight but one kind of fight. And I was determined it must be the fight of faith. I needed someone to turn to, and those of you who have been in the midst of a struggle of some kind, know that one needs help in a very special way during such a siege. I did not want to turn to any other mortal, so I put my trust in One Whom I knew would never "fail" me, "nor forsake" me. I was unafraid, for God had given me peace of heart and mind. And you know, when you are at peace with God, it is not hard to be at peace with your fellow man. I went right on with my plans. My schedule for the midweek services was made out for several months ahead. I had advertising prepared, which was posted in many places, announcing the topics. One of the announced topics was on God's care of His own.

It included a by-line to the effect that people had better not attempt to foil God's plans, or His program for His children. I was preaching these sermons, not for any present circumstances, but rather in preparing material for a book I was writing. The night of the announced service came. The church was filled and God's Spirit was there. I am sure He led in the choice of that topic. I spoke on what a serious thing it is to tamper with the plans of God, and to set oneself to accomplish that which God had designed should not be.

We were enjoying the service when a man appeared at the door of the church. I could see him motion for me to come to him. I excused myself and went to the door. He said, "Would you please pray for brother so-and-so. He's deathly sick!" This was the very man who had set himself to see that I was to be removed. Just that morning I had called him on the telephone. I had heard that this brother was unhappy with me because I was not giving him enough opportunity to preach. So I had asked him to preach in one of the two churches the next Sabbath. But when I called, I heard a very strange garble on the other end of the line. I could not understand what he was saying. But finally he did manage to tell me "No" to my request. Now he was on the brink of death.

Several weeks prior to this, a representative of the General Conference visited us in our community, presumably on vacation. But while in our town, he visited each one of the men involved in the program to get rid of me. He visited every businessman of the church as well. He asked them all how things were going with themselves, their business, and also the church. The report he got from the businessmen was glowing. Without exception, these men reported that the church was prospering, and

they were receiving bountiful blessings. However, the five men gave a rather conflicting report. When he asked them about the church, they said everything was fine except the pastor.

"What's wrong with the pastor?" the visitor asked.

"Everything!" the five men said.

"Well, for instance? Give me an example."

"For one thing," these men said, "he's a liar."

"A liar! That's a very serious charge." He wrote it down on his pad, then asked them to give him an example. They hemmed and hawed, but failed to come up with a single instance.

"But Pastor," they cried, "he lies about everything!" But search as they might, they found it impossible to give an example of a single incident.

"Something else perhaps?" the General Conference man asked.

"Yes," they said, "he doesn't cooperate."

"He doesn't cooperate . . . ," he said as he wrote that down on his pad. "Now if you will, give me an illustration of that charge, please."

"Why, Pastor," they said, "he doesn't cooperate in anything." But they failed to come up with a single shred of proof of an incident substantiating their charge.

They had five charges, but were unable to give a single example. This convinced the representative of the General Conference that the charges were false. He turned to the men and said, "Gentlemen, your house is going to crumble unless you have a change of heart and attitude!" With that he excused himself and left.

I had many an opportunity to speak to this representative. I passed him on the street on several occasions. I knew where he was staying, but I determined, with my wife, that I was not once going to

speak to him about the situation, or endeavor to defend my cause. I was going to put my trust in God and let Him lead in the whole matter.

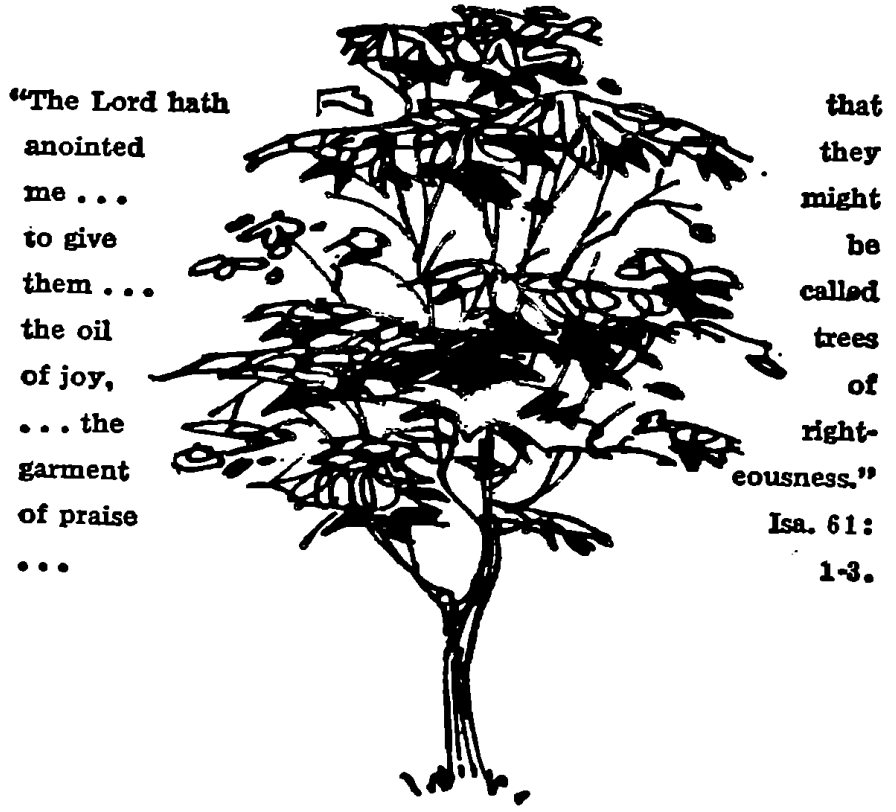
These five men were united in a business venture. They had formed a corporation. One of the men said, "In the light of what the General Conference representative has said, I believe I'm wrong, and with God's help I plan to change my attitude. If you men continue to hold to your purpose, I'm afraid I will have to resign from the group." He was joined by another member of the group who made the same kind of declaration of intention. The chairman just looked at them. Between that time and the next night the leader was stricken with this terrible malady, and now lay at the point of death.

I went back to the pulpit and told the congregation about the plight of the man, and we prayed most earnestly together that if it might be God's will, to save him and spare his life. I had not known of this man's physical problem when I called him, inviting him to preach. In the meantime I asked another one of the five to deliver the Sabbath morning sermon. He accepted the appointment. His message was one calling for unity of action, and a challenge to full cooperation in the entire program. This man had experienced a transformation of attitude. And you can imagine he would, for the brother who was so ill, and for whom we prayed, suffered terribly.

We continued our program there with the Lord's blessing until our work was finished. Then, and not until then, did we move from that church. In this experience we had demonstrated to us the mighty power of God. It helped us to see that when inequities seem to come our way, it is not for us to murmur or complain. It is not necessary to retaliate. God has promised to take care of His own, and if we will claim the promise, He will perform miracles

in our behalf. God cannot lie. Let us trust Him and be witnesses to His power and grace. When Jesus comes, may He find in us a people who are like Him, in spirit and in practice.

Let us pray together: Dear Father in heaven, You have promised, "My grace is sufficient for thee." We cry out asking that Your love will be shed abroad in our hearts for any who misunderstand us. We believe, and thank You we have received by simple faith, sinful though we be. In Jesus' name. Amen. (See 2 Corinthians 12:9; Romans 5:5.)



10

Guided by Visions and Dreams

THERE ARE seven great Bible facts to be considered as we probe our subject. Will you notice them with me?

1. Jesus is coming again! Joel 3:16, "The Lord also shall roar out of Zion."
2. Just before Jesus comes again, there will be a great outpouring of His Holy Spirit. Joel 2:28-30, "And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: and also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit."
3. One of the reasons for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, is to guide people into all truth. John 16:13, "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth."
4. The Holy Spirit will guide us into command-

ment keeping. John 14:15 says, "If ye love me, keep my commandments." Acts 5:32 says that God gives the Holy Spirit "to them that obey him."

5. We are to ask for His Holy Spirit. In Luke 11:11-13, Jesus says that earthly fathers are willing to give their children those things for which they ask. He says that the heavenly Father is much more willing to give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him.

 The gift of the Holy Spirit is the greatest gift Jesus has promised His children, this side of gloryland. That is why He is so eager that we ask for this gift. It brings all other blessings in its train.
6. Then we are to believe and claim the presence of His Holy Spirit. Galatians 3:14 says that the blessing comes through Jesus Christ, "that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith."
7. We are to give Him our bodies as His temple. 1 Corinthians 6:19, "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price."

I have made it a practice in my ministry never to preach a sermon, never to make a visit in a home or give a Bible study, without first asking the Holy Spirit to guide me. There have been a few occasions when I failed to ask Him for this guidance, and I noticed a great difference in the results of my ministry. In our own strength, it is impossible to accomplish what otherwise might be accomplished were we baptized with the Holy Spirit. As the special music is rendered, before I speak in a service, I

pray for an infilling of the Holy Spirit so I might present a message that will be of help to those who listen. As I wait for an answer at the door of a home, after I have rung the doorbell, I pray for the Holy Spirit to be with me. We have a right to do that, because Jesus is coming again, and He wants us to be ready and to help others to be ready. A part of getting ready is accomplished only by the Holy Spirit. This is the work of guidance, and the Holy Spirit will guide us only in response to a request for His guidance. Oh that we might see the wisdom and need for asking for the guidance of the Holy Spirit! I have no question in my mind as to the difference His presence makes.

A while back, my wife and I were asked to come to one of the churches in California to conduct revival services. The pastor and I made a number of visits together. Among the people we visited was a lovely Roman Catholic lady. During the course of our visit, I asked her how she happened to be visiting the Seventh-day Adventist church. Then she told us the following story.

It seems that about a year earlier she had become dissatisfied with her church. In her dissatisfaction, she asked God to lead her to the true church. After having asked for His guidance, she set out to visit a different church each Sunday morning. Each week she came home feeling: This wasn't it! There must be yet another! Her desire to find the true church had not yet been satisfied. So she kept on searching and praying for guidance. She continued this program for about a year.

Finally, one Sunday morning, she came home, still feeling the void in her heart. In her desperation, she fell on her knees and poured out her heart to God. With tears streaming down her face, she pleaded with God to direct her to His people, the

true church. There in the quietness of her room, as she waited for an answer from the Lord, she said that she heard a voice speak to her. She did not recognize the words as the name of a church, for she said, "I had never heard of a church by that name, and I thought I had been to them all. The voice said, 'Seventh-day Adventist.' I was somewhat confused about the name, but, when my husband came home from work later that day, I asked him if there was a church called Seventh-day Adventist." He had heard of that church and confirmed the fact that there was such a church.

"There is?" she asked with an expression of surprise.

"Why yes," he said, "why do you ask? And why are you so surprised?"

Then she told him of her frustration and her attempt to find the true church. She told him how she had prayed, and what the voice had said to her.

"Now, it is my turn to tell you something, Honey," he said. "You have never heard this before, but it is time for me to own up to it. My father was a Seventh-day Adventist minister. I used to be a member, but I am now a backslider."

Well, this was news to this lady! Then she told us how she asked her husband if he would mind if she went to that church the next Sunday.

"Well, you might have trouble finding one open next Sunday, for you see they go to church on Saturday!"

"Saturday? That's strange," she said, "Well, then, would you mind if I went to church next Saturday?" she asked.

"No, Honey," he said, "not at all. Sabbath School begins at 9:30 A.M. and the preaching service is at 11:00 o'clock. I'd be happy to have you go."

So it was, the next Saturday morning found her

in a Seventh-day Adventist church. She with her two children arrived just in time for Sabbath School. Two fine, gracious ladies met her at the door and welcomed her. They asked if she would like for the children to attend their Sabbath School, and offered to guide her to the room for her children. She said, "When we got there, we saw many children the age of my own. I was introduced to the ladies in charge. They seemed more like angels to me than humans. I knew the moment I stepped into the church that this was it! This was God's church. And He had guided me to it!"

The day we visited in her home, she was in the process of being prepared for baptism and union with the church. She was studying the Bible, which Peter says, was written by men who were led by the Holy Ghost. No wonder she was learning truth, for not only was the Holy Spirit guiding her, but she was exposing herself to a Book that the Holy Spirit had inspired. The Holy Spirit always guides people only in harmony with the Book that He inspired, never in opposition to it.

The work of the Holy Spirit is to guide people into all truth. What is truth? The Bible says, "Thy word is truth" (John 17:17). This is the vehicle of truth. As this lady studied the Bible, she became more and more impressed with truth and saw the consistency, the beauty and joy of truth. She had no question about this being the true Church. The pastor had shared with her that this was not a people who claimed to be perfect, but rather a church where the members ask Jesus to help them follow the Word of God without compromise; a people preparing for the greatest event this world has ever seen—the second coming of Jesus. The more she learned, the more determined she was to live in har-

mony with the Bible and become a part of this people.

Years ago, I became acquainted with a man who had a somewhat similar experience. He lived in the eastern part of the United States. He, too had determined that he would pray for guidance. He had no knowledge of God's church, but he knew there must be something better than what he had known. One day he said to his wife, "I am going to fast and pray most earnestly that God will guide me to His church, if there really is such a church." This man began right. Didn't he? He placed himself in a position where God could surely guide him. He asked for the very thing the Holy Spirit was sent to perform—guiding honest souls into truth. No other promise is so bountifully promised as is the promise of the Holy Spirit. It is a promise to any who will ask, believe, and claim the gift. This promise is given for but one reason—to prepare a people for the soon return of Jesus. When one humbly asks for guidance and understanding, God gladly and freely bestows these gifts. This promise is for each of us!

"On the third day of my fast," he said, "I was lying on my bed resting and praying. I was thinking about my request to God, when suddenly I heard an audible voice say, 'Exodus, chapter 20.' Then as my eyes focused on the wall at the foot of the bed, I saw, in glowing words, 'Exodus 20.' I did not know what the 20th chapter of Exodus said, but I sprang from my bed, picked up my Bible, turned to this chapter and read it.

"There I found the ten commandments," he said. "I had heard of them before, but never had I read them with my own eyes. I was impressed with the fact that God Himself had given them from Mt. Sinai, and they must be very important. As I came to the fourth commandment, to my amazement I

found that the Bible commands us to keep holy the seventh day of the week! Here the Creator of heaven and earth plainly requests us to keep the seventh day, the day that He set apart as special and upon which He placed His blessing!

"I don't know how I could have missed it all these years," he added. "I knew most of the other commandments and had tried to keep them, but the one commanding us to keep the seventh day was new to me. Now I knew why the voice had directed me to the 20th chapter of Exodus, and why the words appeared in glowing letters on the wall of my bedroom.

"How I thanked God for this revelation!" he continued. "I hunted the town over for the church that kept the seventh day of the week. I found it called the Seventh-day Adventist church. I started attending that church immediately, for I believed that God had led me to it."

Jesus is coming again. He is going to "roar out of Zion." Not everyone is going to be pleased to see Him come. But before He comes, He will pour out His Holy Spirit to prepare a people for this great event. He accomplishes this preparation by guiding His people into a study of His Holy Word, the fountain of truth. God is preparing a group of commandment-keepers. Revelation 22:14 says, "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city." John is speaking of the City of God—the Capitol City—the New Jerusalem.

My wife and I spent several years as missionaries on the islands of Trinidad and Grenada in the Caribbean, and the northern tip of South America. While in British Guiana (now Guyana) we heard of an experience that took place near the Venezuelan

border. There was an Indian chief who had never seen a Bible. He, with his people, might be called half-civilized, living in a remote region, seeing very few civilized people. The chief claimed to have visions and dreams, just like Joel said men would have. He related these visions and dreams to his people. He told them things that you and I recognize as Bible doctrines. But his only authority was the visions and dreams. They so impressed this chief that he taught them to his people with real conviction. Many believed, and great changes were made in the lives of the people of his tribe.

"Now," he said, "when I die, you will go back to your old ways. You will forget what I have taught you. But some day a white man will come to you. He will carry a black book and will read to you out of this book the very things I have taught you; the things I have seen in my dreams and visions. When you hear this word you will turn from your backsliding and believe the book." What do you guess was one truth he learned in his visions and dreams? Yes—that the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord.

More than this, he saw that dead men are really dead, and that they do not go on living when they die. He saw also that people should pay one tenth of their income to God. When finally our Brother Davis came, after whom these Indians are named, he found straw houses full of produce. It was tithe that these people had been saving up for the white man that was to come to them. The Indian chief even saw the Bible picture of the marriage supper of the Lamb. He saw, too, that the ten commandments were God's set of rules for living, that adultery was evil and that they should be pure and clean. In vision this chief saw every one of the

doctrines that God's Sabbath-keeping church is preaching in the world today.

When our Brother Davis came from America to these Indians, now known as the Davis Indians, they recognized him as the one whom their chief had promised would come. He came with the black Book, and read to them the very things they had heard from their chief. They knew that this man was from the God of the heavens, and they believed his message. What a work was accomplished there! Yes, God had used visions and dreams to bring the message of truth to these half-civilized people, to prepare them for the event all of us are waiting for—the second coming of Jesus!

Among another group of Indians there was a nine-year-old boy who had visions and dreams. His experience was almost a parallel to that of the Indian chief. This lad saw the true doctrines taught in the Word of God, although he had never heard of a Bible. In clear, unmistakable clarity, he saw Bible truths just as the Sabbath-keeping church is preaching them around the world today. I say, Thank God for the great gift of His Holy Spirit to lead and to guide mankind.

The Holy Spirit is not merely a Guide, He is also a Comforter. And He is even more than this. The Bible speaks of the "fruit of the Spirit," in Galatians 5:22. These fruits are: love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness and faith, along with meekness and temperance. When the Holy Spirit really comes into a man's life, it changes him. It perfects his character so he will be ready to meet His Creator. It changes him so he becomes loving, because it is the God of love that has taken up His abode in the heart. No wonder this fact of the Holy Spirit abiding in individuals is stressed in 2 Corinthians 6:16, "Ye are the temple of the living God."

God has said, "I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people." Then the 7th chapter of 2 Corinthians, verse 1 says, "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." God's sure promise of the Holy Spirit fulfilled in our lives, not merely gives us guidance, but also the fruits of the Spirit, and the gifts of the Spirit. These are given for one express purpose—that we might be cleansed from all filthiness of the flesh! God wants a clean people, and He has sent His Holy Spirit to do this work. God wants a people who are pure, even as He is pure. These are the people who "will be glad and rejoice" when Jesus comes. These are the people to whom Jesus will say when He comes, These are My people!

Perhaps one of the most thrilling experiences that has come to us, took place while we were laboring in the West Indies. My wife and I were in charge of ten churches and doing evangelistic work on the island of Grenada. I was the only ordained minister on that island. I was expected to stay on the island to which I was assigned, and not go on vacation or make other trips without first receiving permission from my superior on the island of Trinidad. I was the only one authorized to perform weddings or to officiate at the Lord's table. It was rather important, then, that we stay close by. But one Friday morning I had a very strong impression that I should leave the island of Grenada, where we lived, and go over to the island of Trinidad. This would necessitate our taking a boat. There was no other means of transportation. I know now, that it was the Holy Spirit Who was guiding us.

My wife suggested that she might stay with a friend in St. Georges, the capitol of the island of

Grenada, while I went on. But by the time we drove to St. Georges, she had changed her mind and decided to go on with me. I was glad for this, and so we both went to Trinidad and docked at Port of Spain, the capitol city. When we arrived at the conference headquarters, they looked at us strangely and asked, "What are you doing here?" Which meant, What are you doing here without permission? I answered, "I don't know!" Have you ever gone somewhere and not known why you went there? That was my predicament!

When the pastor of the large church in Port of Spain approached me, asking me to preach for him at the Sunday night evangelistic service, I replied that I had not brought any notes with me. But he insisted I preach that which the Lord would impress me. Another conference official stepped up and invited us to spend the week-end with them as their guests. We were grateful for that. It seemed our needs were being taken care of as well as perhaps the fulfilling of a mission.

So Sunday afternoon I was studying in the guest bedroom of our friends. I had placed the Bible on the bed and knelt down to pray for wisdom and guidance as to what I should preach. In John 16:13 we have the promise, "He will guide you into all truth." I was asking God to show me His will. I said, "Lord, I don't know what I should preach about, but as I turn the pages of Your Book, guide me so I will know what message You want me to give." As I was turning the pages, I was confident that He was guiding me. I *knew* He was. But I did not yet know what He wanted me to give. I came to the very end of the Bible. In fact, I was in the 19th chapter of the book of Revelation. My eyes fell on the 9th verse: "And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage

supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God."

I knew this verse was to be the theme of my message. Then I prayed for further guidance to know which other texts God would have me use in developing this theme. As I continued turning the pages, I knew the Lord would guide me, for He had promised, and I was confident He would keep His promise. My eyes fell on one text after another that impressed me, and which I felt the Lord was telling me to use. I jotted them down as I kept finding them. The sermon seemed to fall into place in my mind as I thought of how these texts blended to show forth a beautiful picture of truth. My heart was burning within me now! I could hardly wait for the evening service to start.

Finally the time came. The pastor, Dr. Millard, led the way to the rostrum as we entered the large church, now filled with waiting worshipers. I followed the pastor, and pastor Yip, a Chinese minister, followed me. In the congregation sat a fine lady, not a member of the Seventh-day Adventist church, but a guest, having come at the invitation of one of the members. As we walked on to the rostrum, this lady turned to her friend and said, "'I have seen that young man before. I even recognize the clothes he is wearing. But I don't know where I've seen him." This was, however, the first time she had visited a Seventh-day Adventist church. In fact, as she entered the church that evening, she looked at the large choir that had assembled in the choir loft and exclaimed, "I've seen the choir before!" But she did not know where she had seen it. As I stood up to preach, I turned to my opening text and began to read, "And he said unto me, Write." At that instant this fine guest put her hand over her friend's hand saying, "I know now where I've seen him. I

saw him in a dream, and he was writing. He was writing texts of Scripture that had been let down from heaven on ribbons. He was writing them out and giving them to the people."

Every text I used that night, she had seen me write out and hand to the people, two years before, in a dream! In this same dream she had been invited by seven different people, of as many different faiths, to go to church that evening with them. One of the seven was a Seventh-day Adventist. In the dream she had accompanied this Adventist lady to the church. In her dream she had seen herself in the church, and had seen me preaching on the very texts that I was using. She had seen me write them out and hand them to the people.

"Of all things," she said to her friend, "I have seen this whole service before! I recognize every text. I saw this preacher give these texts to the people—in my dream!" When the meeting closed, this guest said to her Adventist friend, "If that young man had invited us to accept Christ tonight, I would have stepped up and made my decision."

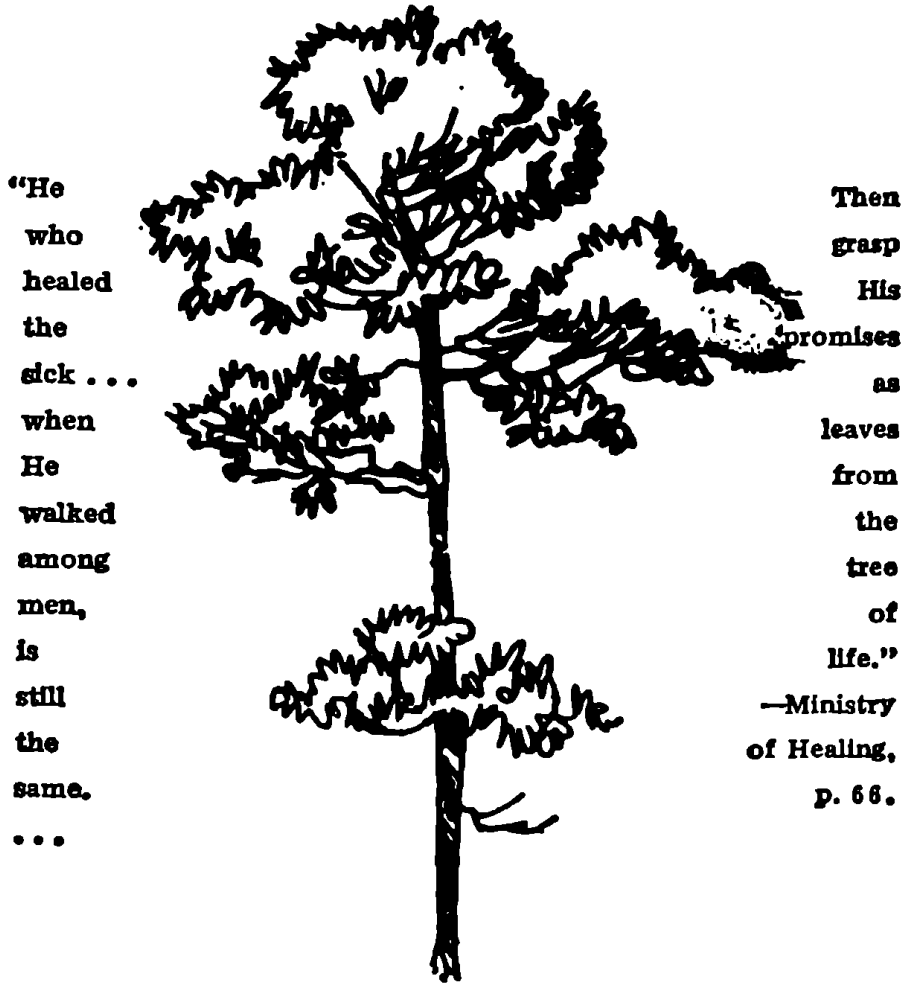
Usually, in my closing prayer I extend an invitation to any who would like to accept Jesus for the first time, or any who have backslidden and want to return, to make this decision manifest by the raising of their hands, or other times by coming down to the altar. But at this particular service, I failed to do this. I do not know why I neglected it. But when later the story I have just told you was related to me, and I realized I had followed through on everything with the exception of the invitation to accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour, I said: "Lord, forgive me for not opening the door, and inviting sinners to surrender to Jesus Christ. You used me as a mouthpiece to fulfill in detail the

dream You had given this guest. But I failed You! Please forgive me, and give me another chance to help this dear soul! Let me meet her again, and I will make up for my neglect, somehow."

It was not long before the leaders in Trinidad invited us to pastor the very church I had preached in that Sunday night. How I thanked God for this evidence of His leadership! I determined right then and there, that just as soon as I could, I would hold a series of meetings in Port of Spain and extend an invitation for this lady and others, to give their hearts to God. We did just that. This lady was there night after night. She was in a terrible state of confusion, with many problems. Among them were those connected with living with a man out of wedlock. But the Holy Spirit came in and helped her solve every problem. What a glorious victory she experienced! When the call to surrender to Jesus and live for Him was extended, she was one of the first to come forward. Later I had the privilege of baptizing her. This was the last series of meetings I held in Trinidad before returning to the States. I have thanked the Lord many times for His wonderful leadership and guidance, and for being able to be used of Him as an instrument for the salvation of a soul whom He was leading by visions and dreams. By the way, this lady had been invited to unite with the Sabbath-keeping church eighteen years prior to this experience but had turned down the invitation. How gracious the Lord is to us, to extend His mercy over so many years!

Remember, dear one, Jesus is coming again! Before He comes, He is going to pour out His Spirit on all flesh. The Holy Spirit will either harden or soften hearts, according to the choice of the individual. Those who receive Him, He will soften and

guide them into all truth. He will make commandment-keepers of those who will follow Him. May we all be willing to follow the guidance of the Holy Spirit and be ready when Jesus comes.



11

Lord's Day Problems Solved, Too

TO UNDERSTAND our subject clearly, I would like to divide it into four sections. You might wish to make a note of them. Each is vital in an atttempt at gaining a clear and vivid understanding of this important subject.

1. Which is the Lord's day?
2. The relationship of the Lord's day to the Lord's love.
3. The ABC's of how to keep the Lord's day.
4. The ABC's of how to display the Lord's love.

First of all, we want to settle the question of which day, if any, is the Lord's. In Revelation 1:10 we read that the Lord does have a day; for John, the Revelator says, "I was in the Spirit on *the Lord's day.*" It does not, however, tell us which day of the week is the Lord's. It does tell us without question, that it is limited to *one* day. In Mark 2:28 the Bible says that the Lord's day is the Sabbath, meaning "rest." But it does not tell which day is the rest day. We turn now to Hebrews 4:4 and 9, and

here it says, "He spake in a certain place of the seventh day on this wise, And God did rest the seventh day from all his works." "There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God." The marginal reading for the word "rest" is: "or, keeping of a Sabbath."

Now, what have we learned? Let us review:

1. The Lord has a day.
2. That day is a rest day.
3. The rest day, the Bible indicates, is the seventh day.
4. So the seventh day is the Lord's day of the New Testament.

We find the location of this Sabbath in Luke 23:54 to 56 and 24:1. Here it tells us it is located between the crucifixion day, or sixth day of the week, and the first day of the week, or the resurrection day, known as Sunday. Many recognize the terms Good Friday and Easter Sunday. The Sabbath is located between those two days. This is how simple it is to find which day is the Sabbath, or Lord's Day, of the Bible!

Now we want to consider the relationship between the Lord's day and the Lord's love. In Exodus 31:15 to 17, we are told that the Sabbath is to be a sign between God and His people. In Ezekiel 20, verses 12 and 20 we are again informed that the Sabbath is to be a sign between God and His people, "that ye may know that I am the Lord your God." The word "sign" means "mark," "flag," or "'banner." These are all synonyms of the word "'sign." The Sabbath, then, becomes God's sign, God's mark, God's flag, God's banner. Since this is true, what relationship does the Sabbath have to God's love? First we turn to 1 John 4:8 where the Bible says,

"He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love." Since "God is love," and since the Lord's day is the sign of the Lord, it must be a sign of love; for "God is love." So the Lord's day immediately becomes a sign between Himself and those who have accepted Him as a loving God. Yes, it is God's love-sign: "He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love" (Song of Solomon 2:4).

The flag of a government represents that government. The flag of God's government represents God. Since the Bible declares that "God is love," and we have seen that the flag, or sign, of God is His Sabbath, so then the Sabbath becomes the flag of God's love government. It bears such a strict relationship to God that it is a sign of love. Is it not reasonable, then, that Sabbath-keepers should be a loving people?

Our next step is to define divine love. The Lord of the Sabbath Himself tells us what this love is: "But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so? Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect" (Matthew 5:44-48).

Here Jesus Himself spelled out divine love. This love is not publican love. Do you know what publican love is? It is when one likes another because he is being liked. Joe likes Paul because Paul likes Joe!

That is the reason why they like each other. Each one's love for the other is predicated on being loved. As soon as Joe doesn't like Paul, Paul doesn't like Joe. That is publican love. I wonder if the majority of Christendom's love has ever gone beyond publican love! I have seen much publican love. But do you know what they call it? "Christian fellowship." God calls it "publican" love!

Take the hypothetical case of two ladies, Mrs. Smith and Mrs. Jones. If one of the sisters comes to Mrs. Smith and says, "Do you know what Mrs. Jones said about you?" She then proceeds to relate a list of unkind things that Mrs. Jones has said. Do you know what Mrs. Smith will probably reply (and this in spite of the fact that just yesterday these two ladies were very good friends)? She'll say, "Well, I can tell you some pretty ugly things about Mrs. Jones too." That is publican love. This type of goings-on is repeated time after time in the name of Christian fellowship. Next week finds them both in church singing, "Love divine, all loves excelling"! They are singing in the clouds, but living in the ditch! How tragic is this kind of demonstration!

Medical science tells us that an individual uses only a small portion of his brain. There are billions of brain cells that lie dormant—never disturbed. But each brain, so it seems, has a swamp area where ill thoughts are bred—publican thoughts. One likes the man who likes him, and despises the man who despises him. This is one of the slum areas of Christian living. What is needed is a new development—a new subdivision, if you please—where restrictive thinking is enforced. This area is reserved for big thoughts, kind thoughts, loving thoughts! Here is where love for unloving individuals is born. Here is where there is a reservoir of gentleness and kindness; where blessings come for those that curse

him. This is where the Sabbath-keeping Christ comes in!

The Sabbath is a sign of divine love. And divine love prompts the saying of something good about the man that says something mean about me. This, and this only, is Christian love. This kind of love is foreign to the vast majority of professing Christians. There are millions of professed Christians who indulge in a love that is no higher than publican love.

Try it some time. Put this to a test and see what happens. Approach someone, telling him that you have heard some unkind thing about him from someone, and name him. Almost invariably he will respond with, "Well, I thought as much. I never did think I could trust him. But just you wait, I know something about him, too." A thoroughbred publican! That is all he is. Claiming to be one thing, but in actuality he is something very different. Singing about the Lamb of God and His love, and living like a hog in a pigsty.

God says He has a day. He says that day is related to Him as a sign of the government of love. Therefore it is the banner of love. This is divine love not to be confused with publican love. There are several different kinds of love. We are not categorizing these psychologically, but Biblically and according to nature.

Another kind of love that I might mention is what I call "hen" love. I grew up on the farm and often observed the mother hens and their broods. It is interesting to watch these hens. They have their counterpart in the church as well. I have observed these "church hens," also. Here is a good church member, perhaps an officer. And here is another very good church member—another officer, perhaps. Now let us observe these two "hens." Neither of

them are able to sing very well, but they "cackle" the best they can. Now let us say that a "chick" of each hen is walking in the yard. They meet and have a misunderstanding. Do you know what is likely to happen? The new environment is not too pleasant. One mother "hen" picks at the "chick" of the next mother "hen." But in church the next Sabbath she "cackles," "Love divine, all loves excelling"! This scene is repeated many times over.

Another good illustration of "hen" love can be found in many day-schools. Watch how some of the parents treat their children's teachers. They are most interested in how the teacher treats *their* child. *Theirs* is a very special child, deserving of special consideration. But they forget that the teacher is somebody's child, too. The teacher's feelings do not matter too much, just so long as one makes sure that ones own child is treated right, according to her own thinking. This is thoroughbred "hen" love!

It is similar to what I call "cow" love. I used to milk many cows and was fascinated with their behavior. On one occasion, I recall, I saw two lovely cows, both blessed with beautiful bass voices. Each had a calf. I observed them one day when the one cow's calf inadvertently moved into the pathway of the other cow. And do you know what that "Christian" cow did? Brother! That cow bunted the little innocent calf half way across the yard. That is what I call, in farmer language, "cow" love.

God's flag is God's day. God's day is the sign of God's love. God's love is divine love. Not publican love. Not "hen" love. Not "cow" love. It is far higher, nobler, and much more inclusive. I have been in homes across the nation and listened as members of professed Christian families give instruction and counsel to their children. The parents

may do a little bragging first. "My Jimmy doesn't pick fights. I've taught him not to." You can see their eyes sparkle with pride and satisfaction as they continue. "But, Jimmy," they say, "if John starts a fight with you, don't you let up until you've knocked the stuffings out of him!" These parents boast of that kind of love. We can be sure of one thing—this is not God's love. It does not come from heaven.

In the example of the life of Jesus we see clearly that "when he was reviled, [he] reviled not again" (1 Peter 2:23). He "committed himself to him that judgeth righteously." Even when the devil accused Jesus at the raising of Moses from the dead, He did not enter into controversy with him. He could have said to Satan, "You have always acted like a devil." And He would have been telling the truth. He could have said, "You are the one who stirred up the mess in heaven." Had Christ said anything like that, we might have exclaimed, "My! Isn't that wonderful how He told Satan off! I think that ought to be recorded as one missionary visit!" But Jesus did nothing of the kind. He simply said, in effect, I am going to turn you over to the God of heaven. He will rebuke you. This is the Christian response.

Look at Jesus before Caiaphas, Pilate and Herod, and on the cross. The mob spit on Him. They shouted insults. Yet He responded tenderly, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34). He is the true Sabbath-keeper's example. He fills us with His love. And the Sabbath is a sign of the love of God. It is God's flag, God's banner of love. God Himself declares it to be so.

Now we probe deeper into this study of the Sabbath. What are the ABC's of financial blessing to the Sabbath keeper? How can a person make a living and still keep God's Sabbath day holy? We were

holding meetings in a little town in North Carolina. We learned of a young lady who had become acquainted with the Sabbath through one of the Bible correspondence courses. We called on her and found her to be a sincere teen-ager. After we visited with her a little, I said, "I understand you have become acquainted with the Sabbath, and have a desire to keep it."

"Yes," she said, "I would like to keep it, but my boss won't let me off work. I have asked repeatedly to have the Sabbath off."

Then I shared an ABC type solution with her. "We have a little formula which will solve that problem and make it possible for you to keep the Sabbath immediately," I smiled.

"Oh, is that right? What is it?" she asked.

"It is very simple," I replied. "And it always works." Then I shared with her the ABC's of prayer. We turned first to Matthew 6:33 where Jesus invites us, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness." I showed her how as we seek first the kingdom of God, He promises to add to us our living. I pointed out that now we would put our finger on the promise and ask God to take care of her and solve the problem. "Then," I added, "we will tell God that we believe He is doing it. And then we will claim the promise by returning thanks to God that He has already found you a new job, if this is what it will take to solve the problem." The "A" is "Ask" (Matthew 7:7). The "B" is "Believe" (Mark 11:24). The "C" is to "Claim," or receive (Matthew 21:22) by returning thanks to God that we *have* received (John 11:41).

She had never done anything like this in her life before, but she followed right along with us. We prayed just as we had planned. After prayer, we stood to our feet and I said, "Now, God has given

you the job. I don't know if it is the one you now have, or whether it is a new one."

Then I said to her, "Do you know that God also tells you *how* to approach your boss when you go to him the next time requesting your Sabbath time off?"

"No, I've never heard of a text like that."

"Well, here it is," I smiled. And we turned to James 1:5-7. Here God invites us to pray for wisdom. And the assurance is given that God will give wisdom. The promise is, "It shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, *nothing wavering.* For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord." We read these words together.

"Now you will go to your boss," I directed. "You won't waver, because God has already taken care of the problem. 'The gift is in the promise.' [See Education, page 258.] You have asked, believed, and claimed the promise. You have met the conditions through the strength God has given you. God has promised, and He cannot fail. Now you don't need to say, 'Can I have the Sabbath off?' God has already arranged this for you. But kindly and graciously tell your boss that you cannot work any longer from Friday evening sunset until Saturday evening sunset. And you will have your job, either where you are now working, or a new job.'"

She smiled and said, "O.K. That's what I will do."

A few days later the pastor and I had occasion to see her again. "Tell us," I said, "how did things go when you went to see your boss?" She was working in a drug store at the time.

"Well," she said, "I went to my boss and said just what you suggested I say. And of all things, my boss said, 'If you mean business, yes, you may have

Saturdays off.'" She was beaming with gratefulness.

God has made a promise and He keeps His word. It is just that simple. We cannot fail when we are linked up with the God of the universe. It will always work!

Now we come to the fourth section of our study. We want to know the ABC's of sharing, or displaying, the Lord's love. If we are retaliating at all—in any way to any one—then we need this love. We need it badly. Have you ever retaliated? I have. But have you ever retaliated since becoming a Christian? I have retaliated since becoming a minister. So we are all in the same boat. But it is a pretty poor boat to be in, and we must not stay there. This divine love for which the Sabbath stands, is creative love. In Genesis 2:1 to 3 and Exodus 20:8 to 11, we are told that the Sabbath is a sign of God's creative power. He worked six days in which He spoke the world into existence, then rested on the seventh day. Therefore we ought to rest as He did and as He has commanded us to. The Sabbath is a sign of our God being the creator.

Now we take a promise by which to get the love that comes from God. Romans 5:5, "And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us."

This is the promise. We can kneel down and put our fingers on Romans 5:5 and ask God for the fulfillment of that promise. We can boldly ask Him for this creative love that comes from the God of the universe. We ask Him to fill our hearts with this love.

Or you may wish to claim Ezekiel 36:26 where the promise is made: "A new heart also will I give you." Only the Creator can give you a new heart.

He has promised a new spirit as well. "And," God promises, "I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh."

Or you may wish to take Psalm 51:10, "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me."

Another promise is couched in the language of Romans 8:9 where it says, "Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." We can be one of God's children if we ask. This verse tells us that Christ's children have the spirit of love and joy which Christ had. This is ours. Christ promised it to you and to me.

We can place our hands on any of these promises and claim the very gift it offers. How many times I have taken Ezekiel 36:26, placed my hand on that promise and asked God for love and understanding of my brethren! How often have I taken Romans 8:9 and prayed for the Spirit of Christ to flood my soul! Psalm 51 may have some tear-stains on it, too. God hears, and marvelous things have happened in this old heart of mine.

It is so simple, yet so powerful! First we find the promise. Then placing our finger on it we ask God for this love to be shed abroad in our hearts. We look into His face and say, "Now, Lord, because You are the Creator as well as my Redeemer, You have the power to speak a world into existence. And You can speak a new heart into existence in me. I have misrepresented Your love, dear Lord. The Sabbath is a sign of divine love, and I have not always displayed it. Someone said some mean thing about me, and I retaliated. Forgive me, Lord. Now I ask You to shed abroad Your love. I know I cannot speak kind words unless my heart is kind. I cannot show love unless I have a reservoir of love in my heart. Lord, I need the love that comes from You. Please

let Your love be shed abroad in my heart. Now, Lord, I believe You are doing this for me, and return thanks to You for having done it."

Now, what do I do? I follow the instruction of Mattthew 5:44 where it tells me to love my enemy. I make a list of one or more of the good qualities of the one that is being mean and unkind to me. You will be amazed at what happens when you start doing that. The good qualities are there in black and white! The devil will not like that. He does not want you to make a list like that. It points up the good in the one whom he would have us think has not one good quality.

"Bless them that curse you." Read the list over and let your ears hear your voice speak these good qualities of the one who has hurt you. This is blessing them. Christ did not say, "Bless them out!" He said, "Bless them." Many people would like to add the word "out" into the phrase, but it isn't there. Christ is saying, in effect, Say something good about your enemies.

Then Jesus goes on to say, "Do good to them." This is not just an idea. This is a command. It is not *my* idea. This is Christ's program. It came from the One Who said, "Be ye therefore perfect." You and I cannot change our motives. This has to be done by divine love. But we can ask and believe and claim this divine love. And if I claim it, and return thanks that I have it, I will start displaying that love. This is what happens: Since I cannot change my motives, and I realize I cannot, then when I obey God and begin to do some kind act to someone who has committed a mean act toward me, God gives me the *emotion.* When I use the motion He tells me to, He gives the emotion.

Many years ago, my wife and I were traveling and living in a house trailer. We were in itinerant

evangelism. We drove into a city, located a trailer park and arranged for a trailer space. There was an empty space right next to ours, and I parked our car in that space. I had no idea it was being used by my neighbor. But when he came home and found I had parked my car in his empty space, he was very unhappy with me. I might say he was mad, for it was just that bad! He came out to where I was and blessed me out! I explained immediately that I had no idea this was his car space, and apologized for having parked my car there. But he would not accept my apology. He might be called a thoroughbred publican! I went into my house trailer and I will have to admit I did not feel very good. Here I had apologized and this man had simply refused to accept my apology. In the first place, I did not know it was his parking space. In the second place, I never would have parked there had I known it was his space. In the third place, I had apologized. And in the fourth place, the man did not accept it in the first place! So this did not make me feel very good.

I did not know what to do. A man feels miserable when he is upset emotionally. So I had to have a talk with the Lord. I said something like: "Lord, do something to these emotions of mine."

The Lord said to me, "Do what I have told you to do. Do something good to this man."

But I argued, "What can I do to a man who will not even accept an apology?"

The Lord said, "Didn't you bring a lot of oranges and grapefruit back from Florida with you? Go and share some of them with the rascal!"

So I went to the box of fruit and picked out some nice oranges and grapefruit and took them over to his trailer. This man literally stared at me. I began cheerily, "Do you folk like oranges and grapefruit?"

When I said that, I began to see the faintest smile come over his face.

"Why, yes," he said, "we do."

"Well, I wonder if you could do me a favor. We brought so many with us, we would like to share them with someone before they spoil. Could you use some?"

At that, they smiled a real publican smile and said, "Thank you. Thank you."

I don't know whether either of them belonged to a church choir or a board of deacons, or perhaps a Ladies Aid Society, but when they saw those oranges and grapefruit, every evil trait was gone. They just vanished. I know one thing: I surely felt better! When I first went over, I felt that I lived in a *mobile* home and they in a *trailer*. When I returned, I felt we both lived in mobile homes!

God says, "Do good to them." Express confidence that God has shed abroad His love in your heart, and speak words of commendation and love for those who might be guilty of mistreating you. Do it. Only then will you experience the entrance of this divine love. This experience is a part of the great divine plan God has laid out for His people. This is true Sabbath-keeping, because it displays God's love flag. Anything less than this is not Sabbath-keeping. It is publicanism. It is "hen" love. It is "cow" love. What we must have is the love of Jesus. Not only may we possess it, but we may display it!

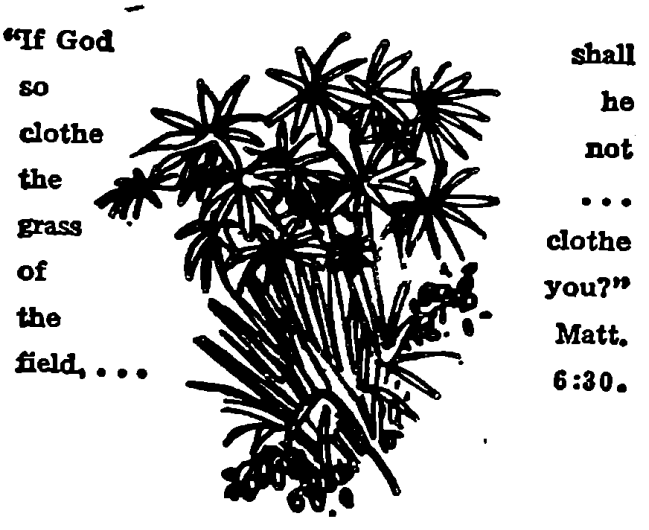
Notice Psalm 60:4, "Thou hast given a banner to them that fear thee, that it may be displayed because of the truth."

You and I love truth. Don't we? God says if we love truth, we will display it. We will not merely *talk* about the truth. We will *display* the love of the truth. When we hear that someone has said an unkind thing about us, what will we do? Retaliate with

an equally unkind story? No, for if we have spent time on our knees with God, and claimed His promises of love, and received a new spirit, we will respond with, "I know something good about him." This will be the kind of retaliation we will display.

Oh that we might let His Spirit appropriate this love to our hearts by the power of Jesus Christ! This is the armor we need to protect us against the darts of the wicked one. It will be our only safeguard in the time of trouble that lies ahead. If we will ask, believe, and claim the promise for "eternal life" (1 John 2:25), for "victory" (1 Corinthians 15:57), and allow God to "create ... a clean heart, ... and renew a right spirit within" us (Psalm 51:10), and "love" (Romans 5:5), we will be rewarded by our Creator-Redeemer with the love of Christ and power to display that love under every circumstance of life.

Prayer: Dear Lord, we ask believingly for Your promised love—that divine love. We claim it, and thank You we have received the promised gift. In Jesus' name. Amen.



12

Promises for the Time of Trouble

IN THIS final chapter, I want to share with you some of the most thrilling evidences that we serve a God of love. Of all the wonderful things I have learned from God's Book, nothing is more wonderful than that which I want to share with you now.

Notice with me, twelve Bible promises, or clusters of promises. As we read them together, I trust you will be able to rejoice with me in the provision the Lord has made for us. To think that down here on the only planet in which the stain of sin can be found, small "I" am noticed and included in the great plan of salvation! This thought is overwhelming! But yet it is true.

I was reared in a Sabbath-keeping home. At the tender age of six, my mother told me the story of Jesus. In her simple, humble manner she told me of His birth and His life. She shared with me how He healed the sick and brought joy to the unhappy, and finally gave His life for me that I might have eternal life. The story was so touching that I fell in love with Him. I said, "Mother, what shall I do?" She suggested that we do what 1 John 1:9 says to do: to confess our sins and believe He will cleanse us from every stain that the sin has left.

We knelt down in my little bedroom in that old

farmhouse, and there beside my mother I prayed and asked Jesus to forgive my sins. I believe that He did. I believed it then without question. I knew that I had become His child. I had fallen in love with Jesus. It was such a happy experience! That is the way it should be. Shouldn't it? The Bible says in 1 John 4:19 that this love is natural because He first loved us. My love was the result of that kind of an experience. I felt His love for me very clearly. It was a joy to go to church and realize that the One Who loved me and shed His blood for me, was there.

But something very unfortunate happened to me. I went to church and backslid! Yes, that's right. I backslid right in our little home church.

You ask, why? 1 John 4:18 tells us: "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love." I heard a sermon in church that Sabbath about the seven last plagues that were to come upon the world; and we had better watch out or one of them would up and catch us! I heard about a time of trouble that was to burst upon the world, the like of which we had never known, and we were liable to be swept away by it. They told, too, about Turkey being driven out of Europe, and it sounded to me that if we didn't watch out, we might be driven out with it! Oh, the fears, and chills, and tremors I experienced! My spine fairly tingled with fear as I sat there! How scared I became, thinking about all the terrible things I had to look forward to! Right there in that church, I backslid.

It seems that all the love that had come in by my acquaintance with Jesus (which experience I know was real, for love was a real factor in my life) was driven out by an avalanche of fear. You see, love and fear cannot dwell in the heart at the same time.

When one comes in, the other must take leave. In my case, fear took the place of love. And I simply backslid. Time and time again, people start on the way to the kingdom. They are full of love and joy. They have a real experience with the Lord. They are happy to be a part of God's wonderful family. Then all of a sudden their entire experience is shattered. Fear is injected into the heart with no emphasis on the assurance of eternal life, of God's protective love and never-failing care.

Recently, while conducting a series of meetings, I mentioned the problems that I had faced. A young lady came up to me and stated that she had had the same experience. "In fact," she said, "I became so worried and fearful that I finally decided I would quit going to church. And even after I quit going to church, when I had to be in that area, I would go out of my way so as not to pass the church building. I equated the church with this terrible fear I had. I did not want to be anywhere near the church."

I believe there is something wrong with preaching of that kind. Don't you? I think very few ministers of my faith major in fear. It is hardly consistent with a loving God to have His ministers present a message which will instill that kind of fear. The Bible tells us that we fall in love with Jesus because He is a lover. And since the Bible says that fear has torment and no one who fears can be made perfect in love, I say that these dear people who emphasize one truth of the Bible to the neglect of another just as vital, misrepresent God and fail to give a clear, complete picture of Him.

The Bible does picture for us some rather dismal days ahead. It does describe the seven last plagues in rather graphic language. It will be terrible. But, there is something else! God emphasizes the fact that in the midst of all this, His people are going to

be protected and cared for. God promises to look after His own during these terrible days of conflict. It was the absence of emphasis of these verses of Scripture that put fear into my young heart and caused me to backslide. It was the incomplete picture, the exclusion of God's promise of eternal life, of His protection, that turned the young lady away from the church. Today, absence of these vital facts of God's love can drive many away from our Lord. He promises eternal life, victory, and divine protection.

God wants His people, as they face this time of trouble, to have peace. Yes, He has made it abundantly clear that provision has been made for those who will hide under the "shadow of the Almighty." But the devil does not want us to emphasize this. He wants us to become actually scared, because he knows that fear has torment, and this fear will quickly snuff out the flame of love. Once the flame of love has been extinguished, our Christian experience dies, for love is essential to the Christian experience, just like oxygen is to the existence of life.

God wants you and me to have peace. He wants us to have a peace that passes all human understanding. We might not be able to explain it, or define it, but we can testify to the fact that we have it! We can look forward, down the stream of time, and realize that Bible-predicted events will come. But they do not breed fear. We are not worried and disturbed about it. Peace has taken the place of fear, and we are happy. I want to share with you what I wish had been shared with me as I sat in church when I was but six years old.

First of all, I want to have us notice something that is basic, as we discuss coming events. It is found in Jeremiah 30:7. There, speaking about the time of trouble that is coming, it refers to it as "the

time of Jacob's trouble." It says of God's people, they "shall be saved out of it." Isn't that wonderful! God makes this promise to each of us. Let us keep that in mind as we share some of these promises now. This will be discussed again under point eleven, but I mention it at the outset to help us realize that provision has been made for each of us to safely come through this distressing time.

How was Jacob saved out of his time of trouble? Jacob represents God's people. So it is important to know how he was saved out of his time of trouble. His time of trouble represents a similar experience of God's people. That fact makes it doubly important for us to understand Jacob's experience. This brings us to point one.

1. Jacob claimed a promise of God. Jacob was on his way back to his home, with his family and all that he had acquired in Padanaram. He had heard that Esau was on his way to meet him, accompanied by 400 soldiers. Imagine the fear Jacob must have had! Here were all his little ones, his cattle and servants, with not a single soldier in his group. Coming toward him was his brother, whom he had wronged and cheated, with an army of trained soldiers. In his agony and fear, Jacob began to talk to God about it. Notice his words in Genesis 32:9, "And Jacob said, O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac, the Lord which saidst unto me, Return unto thy country, and to thy kindred, and I will deal well with thee."

Jacob said to God, "Lord, You promised me that You would look after me. You told me to go home, and promised that You would deal well with me. I am not worthy of the least of Your blessings. I know that. But my brother is coming with 400 soldiers, and I am terribly afraid. I am scared, Lord, but You told me I would make it home safely."

Can't you see him agonizing with God and placing before Him the promise that was made to him by One Who does not lie, nor go back on a promise? This is what Jacob did. And he had a wonderful promise to claim.

We, too, are on the home-stretch. Our heavenly home is almost in sight. God says that those who do what Jacob did, will make it home! I want to make it home. Don't you? God gave Jacob a promise, and this same promise is ours: I will be with you. You will make it home safely. It is a promise that we too can claim. I do not know of anything I want more than to walk through those pearly gates into that city of gold and see my heavenly Father, and Jesus Christ, my Elder Brother, my guardian angel, and all my friends, and know I am home at last! Provision has been made. The promise has been given to make this dream a reality. The Bible tells us that if we are Christ's, then we are of the seed of Abraham. (See Galatians 3:29.) Jacob claimed the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac. We have the right to do the same. We too can say, "Lord, You have promised to see me home safely." And we can know He will do it for us, because He did it for Jacob.

Notice with me this same promise phrased just a little differently. In this promise we can know that God is speaking directly to you and to me. 1 John 2:25 says: "And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life."

I remember, as though it were yesterday, the first time I opened my Bible and put my finger on that promise. With my finger on that promise, I inserted my name where it says, "us," and it read, "And this is the promise he hath promised Glenn Coon, even eternal life." God has given me this promise. He wants me to take Him at His Word. Doesn't He? He

most surely does. Abraham, we are told, believed God, and the fact that he believed was counted unto him for righteousness. So what matters is not how sinful I am, but rather how good God is. It is this God, the One Who loves each of us, Who says, "I will see you home."

2. God will provide us with the necessities of life during the time of trouble. We have all been impressed, at one time or another, with the fact that during the time of trouble we will not be able to buy or sell. Revelation 13 describes that time. It says plainly in verse 17, "And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast." This will be a terrible time! But the Bible has a promise for us for that time. It is found in Isaiah 33:16, "He shall dwell on high: his place of defence shall be the munitions of rocks: bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure."

Then Isaiah says that we shall "see the king in his beauty" (verse 17). This is a double promise. It assures us again that we will make it home, and also that we will be given food and water on the way. Although the rivers and waterways will be turned to blood, God wants us to think of and to remember the fact that our bread and water will be sure.

That does not fill me with fear. Does it you? Why, no. We can look forward to that time without any trace of fear. We may be out there in the rocks, but the Rock Who will go with us will be Jesus. With Him by our side, we need never fear. He has promised to take care of us and supply us with the essentials of life. And all of this at a time when the world of ungodly men and women will be thirsty and hungry! No, this picture is not one of fear, as far as we are concerned. The only thing we have to

fear is sin, for this separates us from our Protector and Saviour.

When as a little boy I heard of the terrible plagues that are coming, the comforts of God's protection may have been mentioned, but if so, I did not hear it. I trembled to think of not having any food in my tummy. I pictured myself wasting away and being in such a terrible state. I was just plain scared! I didn't want that day to come. You see, I was not given the whole picture, or else I did not grasp it. God says we will have food. He says He will look after us. These facts should be emphasized again and again, so little boys and girls, and older ones as well, will not be filled with anguish.

3. When the seven last plagues come, the saints will have a place to hide. I recall so distinctly, how this speaker described those plagues. To a little boy it seemed that every time he preached, it was on Revelation 16 and the seven last plagues. I identified this man with the plagues. He had, it seemed to me, a plague phobia. He was plague-conscious! I cannot recall his having read a single promise of God's protection over His people. Had he read Psalm 91, what a difference it might have made. Notice these words: "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust. Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, and from the noisome pestilence. He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust: . . . Because thou hast made the Lord, which is my refuge, even the most High, thy habitation; there shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling."

Oh, how I wish they had empahsized that text and given some assurance to my little, trembling

heart! Peace would have returned. The love of God would have returned. But fear reigned supreme in my heart, and the love of God vanished. Yes, right in our church I began to backslide because the preacher was plague-conscious instead of God-protection-conscious. Now maybe the speaker did dwell on the truth of God's loving protection. But if so, it only emphasizes the need of *much more* emphasis, so trembling, believing hearts will rest in Christ's loving protectiveness.

That preacher might have given us boys and girls the example of the hen and how she guards her little chickens from the dangers that are ever present. He might have told how the hawks like to swoop down and pick up these litttle chicks. But as soon as a hawk appears in the sky, the mother hen calls her little ones and they find shelter under her wings. When the hawk gets discouraged and flies away, the chicks come out and go on with their play. We sing, "Under His wings I am safely abiding," and then fail to make clear to fearful hearts that Jesus died on dark Calvary so all believers might be safe in the time of trouble. It is true, my friend, and you and I are invited to believe it now!

4. Now let us turn to Daniel 12:1. This verse tells us of a time of trouble, such as never was on the earth. Some of the preachers of my boyhood day emphasized the first part of this verse so much, that I never knew until I was older there was another sentence that followed. It is not that I want to hide my head in the sand and say there is not going to be a time of trouble. We should do what the wise man suggests in Proverbs 22:3, "A prudent [wise] man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself." He does something about it. He does not emphasize the fear, but rather seeks refuge in a safe place. We have been provided with this place. And the place is

Jesus. We can hide in Him. Notice: "And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book" (Daniel 12:1).

Oh, I wish that as a little boy, sitting there in church that morning, the second part of the verse might have been emphasized again and again so I could have had assurance! The preacher dwelt only on the first part, and seemed to leave out the provision for protection and safety—at least so it seemed to me. There are some, however, who fall into the temptation of the devil in thinking there is no hope anyway, because this Scripture says this protection is only for those whose names are written in the book. Satan says, You don't have a chance because you do not have your name written there. This brings me to the next point.

5. Are our names in the books of record in heaven? Notice with me several verses of scripture. The first is John 1:12, "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

By taking advantage of the provisions offered, we have our names written in the Book of Life. This is recorded in Revelation 3:5: "He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels."

There it is! Our names are in the Book of Life, and we can claim the promise of Daniel 12:1. God says we will be delivered. "Every one" of us.

"Yes," but someone says, "this raises another problem. It promises this only to the 'overcomers,' and I haven't overcome everything I need to." The very fact that there is a Book of Life, and there are names written in it, proves the possibility of my name and your name being entered there. God never asks us to do the impossible. I am sure that by now, having read the preceding eleven chapters of this book, you will have found the solution to any unsolved problems. Jesus has made Himself responsible for our victory, and He cannot fail. With Him on our side, every mountain-like problem becomes an ant hill. He has promised the vilest sinner forgiveness, victory, and eternal life as free gifts. Overcoming takes place through faith, not by works; by believing Christ, not by struggling alone. (See Isaiah 1:18; 1 Corinthians 15:57; 1 John 2:25; 1 John 5:4.)

6. The Bible says that before Jesus comes, the devil will come down in great wrath. (See Revelation 12:12.) This used to bother me a great deal. And to be rather frank with you, I will have to say it still bothers me some. No, the text does not bother me. What bothers me is when I go into the homes of people, and sometimes find they are devil-centered. What do I mean by being devil-centered? I mean that people go on talking about the devil. They rehearse all the things the devil is doing. They relive every antic the devil has accomplished, and dwell on all he has done. They say, "Did you hear what the devil did last week? He did it again." And on and on they go. This is a kind of devil worship. There is a cluster of texts to show how to avoid being devil-centered in the sense pictured above. Just listen to, or read, this command: "And thou shalt remember all the way which the *Lord thy God* led thee" (Deuteronomy 8:2).

We know that God is bigger than the devil. We know this, because God put the devil out of heaven. (See Revelation 12:7-9.) We know that Christ is bigger than the devil. We know this, because, as recorded in Matthew, chapter 4, when the devil came to Jesus with his strongest temptations, Jesus said, "Get thee hence, Satan." One is impressed with this fact when one reads the gospels. Each time Christ met the devil, there was a conflict. And each time, Jesus won. Sometimes the devils surrendered with cries of anguish and thrashed around in their victims. But Christ was always victorious. He still is today. Let us remember that the devil is stronger than any of us. Let us never forget that. But let us not engage in devil-centered conversation. Let us follow the counsel of 2 Corinthians 3:18 and behold the face of our lovely Jesus, and think and talk of Him. As we dwell on the attributes of Christ, we will become like Him, and in Him we can meet a conquered devil and his temptations victoriously. On the other hand, if we are constantly talking about the devil, we unconsciously begin to take on his attributes.

One time a man came to me at the close of one of my messages and said, "Brother Coon, I see what my trouble has been all this time. I have been working for the Lord, like the devil. I have learned now what is wrong with me." If we spend our time talking about an unworthy member of the church, in time we become more and more like him. What gain is there in rehearsing the evil of another? None whatsoever. It gradually makes us like that one.

Oh that we might remember that "we . . . beholding are changed into the same image" (2 Corinthians 3:18). Paul admonishes us, "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are

pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; ... think on these things" (Philippians 4:8). These are the things we are to think on. These are the positive traits of character we want growing in our lives. Isn't that right? Why, yes.

My favorite author has, in a priceless gem, encouraged us to be Christ-centered. "When once the gaze is fixed upon Him [Christ], the life finds its center."—*Education*, page 297.

Christ is plainly the center of a life that is in balance. When the gaze is removed from Christ, we become unbalanced Christians. This is why I backslid right in church. Mother had fixed my gaze on Jesus. I was then a six-year-old balanced Christian. I went to church and the center of my gaze was put on the time of trouble and Armageddon. I became unbalanced and lost my experience. It is just that simple! It is possible, you see, to fix our gaze on the time of trouble to the extent that we are in trouble in the development of character.

Now, how can we avoid falling into this trap of the devil? How can we grow to be like Jesus, instead of like a troublemaker? Here is the promise. It is found in 1 John 3:1-3. "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure."

Is not this what we ought to be feeding on? Is not this the promise that should be the inspiration of our souls? Is not Jesus the One Who should be the center of our thoughts? When someone says, "Say,

by the way, did you hear what the devil did this week?" you can reply, "No. But have you heard what the Lord did this week?" We need to talk more about what the Lord is doing. That is what those, whose names are in the Lord's book, will be doing. Notice Malachi 3:16, 17: "Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another: and the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name. And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him."

What a promise for the time of trouble! Isn't this marvelous? God says: "If you will talk of Me and think of Me, I will spare you in the time of trouble. I will look after you." This is the promise of God. When we are thinking of Christ and talking about Him, it is virtually impossible to be talking about the erring members of the church. It is impossible to be finding fault with a brother or sister in the family, or in the faith. We can be centered on only one side at one time. We are either Christ-centered, or creature-centered.

7. The Bible indicates clearly that, as we near the end, the Lord is going to slowly, but surely, withdraw His spirit from the world. "As the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be." "My spirit shall not always strive with man." (See Matthew 23:37; Genesis 6:3.)

But in the face of this, we need not fear. The Lord has given us sufficient evidence of His power for that time, too. We must ask, believe, and claim this promised power. (See Matthew 7:7; Mark 11:24; John 11:41.) In Luke 11:13, the Lord has promised the gift of the Holy Spirit. If we ask, believe, and claim Him, we shall receive Him as a gift

from our heavenly Father. In Joel 2:28, a very special outpouring of His Spirit is promised His people. Many people are afraid of the Holy Spirit. They do not understand what it means to have Him. What does it mean to have the Holy Spirit in the heart? Notice Galatians 5:22, "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance."

Don't you want joy and peace during the time of trouble? Isn't that the most priceless gift for a time when those who have rejected Christ will be devoid of these qualities, their souls dry and barren and full of pain and anguish?

I was conducting a series like this in a certain place. The pastor came to me and said, "One of my leading officers is quite upset about your series."

"Why?" I asked.

"He says this is just milque-toast," was his reply.

"Let me ask you just one question, Pastor. How do he and his wife get along?"

"Like cats and dogs," he responded.

When Jesus is not in the heart, it is hard to get along with our loved ones, and these eternal things seem insipid. Jesus makes the difference. At a time when the Spirit of God is being withdrawn from the earth, we can be assured that He will give us a great measure of it, if we really want Him, and truly seek Him. It will be revealed whether or not we have the Spirit, by whether or not there is love in the home and in the heart.

8. Jesus says in Matthew 24, that just before He comes, the times will be like those that existed in the days of Noah. Do you know of those who love to talk about and dwell upon the sins of the present day? People who enjoy talking about the sex perverts and the sins of the flesh and those things that are shameful? Their saliva flows in double strength

at a time when these things are discussed. The world *is* sinful. We live in a very wicked age. But are we justified in making this the *center* of our thoughts? What would this thinking do for us? "As he thinketh in his heart," says the wise man, "so is he" (Proverbs 23:7). How much better it would be to center our thoughts on this promise: "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord: and he shall turn the heart of the fathers [parents] to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers [parents], lest I come [if I didn't do it] and smite the earth with a curse" (Malachi 4:5, 6).

Things will be so bad that if Christ did not send a special outpouring of His Spirit, He would have to destroy the earth before the time. A mighty revival is promised—a revival that will make the home, "Home, Sweet Home." Homes that are looking forward to Jesus' coming, will major in being sweet homes.

What would you think of one who spends thirty hours a week in Dorcas work, while her husband is neglected and loses his way, while her teen-age boy falls by the way-side, and her lovely daughter sells herself to the evil one? All this time, Mother is rejoicing that she is doing more Dorcas work than all the church combined! Dorcas work is wonderful and needful and not to be belittled. Not at all. Would to God that more of our ladies were involved in it. How wonderful it would be if many more of the church members spent one or two hours a week in Dorcas work! Then spent time in Christian witnessing. And spent the rest of the time making home the most delightful place on earth! Yes, telling their husbands that they love them, their wives that they love them, their children that they love them! Making home a happy place. If we will follow

the instruction found in Deuteronomy 11:18-21, we are promised that our days will be "as the days of heaven upon the earth." What a promise to take with us as we approach the time of trouble and see the fulfillment of Malachi 4:5, 6.

9. What about these children of ours that are out of the ark of safety? How many parents have a real burden for their children who have left the church? Here is a promise you can claim: "And I will give them an heart to know me, that I am the Lord: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God: for they shall return unto me with their whole heart" (Jeremiah 24:7).

God does not want us to cry doubtful tears, but tears of faith about our children who are out of the fold. No, we can ask God for help, believing that He is saving our children. We can return thanks that He has done it, as we learn the science of soul-winning communication. Notice the words of Jeremiah 31:16, 17: "Thus saith the Lord; Refrain thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears: for thy work shall be rewarded, saith the Lord; and they shall come again from the land of the enemy. And there is hope in thine end, saith the Lord, that thy children shall come again to their own border."

God can put a dance in the eyes and a song in the heart as we claim this promise, believing the Lord is working out His purpose for our loved ones as we cooperate with Him. He has promised to do this. Let us believe Him, and claim the promise.

10. Do you want to be guided into this kind of an experience? You do not have to sit and wish for it. Here is a promise by which you can have it, and have it now. We do not have to wait for a time in the distant future. It is ours to possess now. Notice: "And I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not; I will lead them in paths that they have not

known: I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight. These things will I do unto them, and not forsake them" (Isaiah 42:16).

Isn't this a wonderful promise for guidance and light as we enter the dark days that lie ahead? How wonderful God is to us!

11. And now the promise to which I referred at the beginning of the chapter: "Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob's trouble, but he shall be saved out of it" (Jeremiah 30:7).

Here it is! God's word that we will be saved out of the terrible time of trouble that lies just ahead. Surely, it will come. It will be terrible! It will be the worst kind of existence this world has ever known. We believe it. But we can live in the assurance that, if our hearts are right with God now and we continue to have fellowship with Him each day, when that time comes we will be saved out of it. Let us anchor our hopes and vision in God's promise.

12. Now we turn to Hebrews, chapter 6. In this chapter Paul says, under inspiration, that God made a promise to Abraham and backed it up with an oath. This arrangement, Paul says, constitutes an immutable structure of truth. It is impossible for God to lie. This, according to Paul's letter, gives us hope as an anchor.

There are some rough waters ahead over which we must sail. However, come what may, we have a promise and an anchor! What more can we ask for? God Himself has promised us safety and victory. Notice the promise found in Isaiah 43:2: "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee."

Isn't that plain? Isn't that satisfying? There are at least 3,573 promises, or clusters of promises, in

which we can find hope and confidence as we approach the time of trouble, so we need not fear and lose heart. These form an anchor that will hold us secure in the most tempestuous storms. Our destination is the sea of glass. This is the final wharf of our earthly voyage. He has promised to be the Captain of our ship, if we allow Him the privilege. There we will sing the song of Moses and the Lamb. What a chorus that will be! And the wonderful thing about it is, that each of us can be a part of that large throng.

We're almost home;
We're almost home.
 Oh, won't you go with me?
 The voyage sweet will be.
We're almost home;
We're almost home,
 To the New Jerusalem.

g.a.c.